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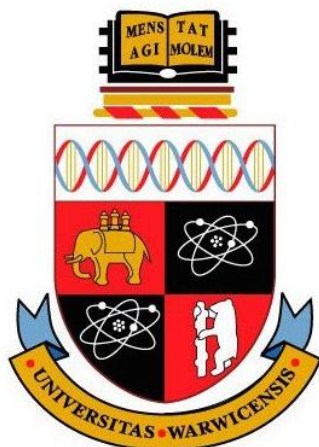
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Pre-service Teachers Reflecting on their Teaching Practice: An Action Research Study in a Mexican Context

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in
English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics

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List of abbreviations

AR	Action Research
C	Cycle (e.g. C1, C4)
DJ	Dialogic Journal
ELED	English Language and Education Department
ELM	English Language Major
FB	Facebook group
FG	Focus Group Interview
GI	(Final) Group Interview
GR	Group Reflection
L1	First Language
NEPBE	National English Programme in Basic Education
PRESETT	Pre-service English Teacher Training
PS	Plan of Studies
PSHD	Polical Science and Humanity Division
PSTs	Pre-service teachers
QR	Qualitative Research
R	Round
RJ	Researcher's Journal
RP	Reflective Practice
RQ	Research Question
SCT	Socio-Cultural Theory
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Education)
SLTE	Second Language Teacher Education
SR	Stimulated Recall
UQRoo	University of Quintana Roo
VR	Voice recording
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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Florí.

Declaration

I declare that the present thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation, assignment, or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma, or any other qualifications.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dzay Chulim', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Floricely Dzay Chulim

Abstract

Studies conducted on reflection claim that when student teachers are being trained to become language teachers, reflective practice should start from the early stages. Rodman (2010) states that reflective practice helps pre-service teachers (hereafter PSTs) to actively consider and reconsider beliefs and practices that allow them to improve their ability to monitor decisions about what and how to teach. However, it has been observed in other studies (e.g. Ward and McCotter 2004) that some PSTs remain at a simple descriptive level of reflection. Kwan and Simpson (2010:417) state that this is because 'reflection usually begins with an unstructured approach [...] which may not enable the teacher to move from a mere 'thinking' process to a higher level of reflection and action'.

This thesis shows the results of an action research study developed in a public university in the state of Quintana Roo, Mexico. The outcomes in this study help to understand how collaborative reflections are produced and promoted in a Second Language Teacher Education programme. The study also provides an insight into the concerns, learning and development of Pre-service teachers in Mexico. The main goal of the study was to intervene and introduce the use of various tools, strategies and values to engage in collaborative and dialogic reflection. The findings show that the participants positively engaged in reflective practice with the use of (mainly) two tools (journals and group reflections) and the promotion of reflective strategies, collaborative and dialogic reflection, as well as the support of continuous questioning in a non-threatening environment. Data revealed that the student teachers followed a process of reflection that developed from simple descriptions to a more evaluative process at the end of the intervention.

Chapter One: Introduction

Current interest in reflective practice can be traced back to the beginning of the last century when John Dewey (1910) first introduced the term. Dewey's contribution was built on by van Manen (1977) and Schön (1983) who provided new concepts of reflection. The works of Dewey, van Manen, and Schön have influenced other researchers due to the fundamental roles they played in developing a better understanding of reflection: not just as a simple thought-process about a situation, but as a more sophisticated conceptualization of the term reflection, with the purpose of comprehending and solving specific situations. These ideas have been used in the education field, thus reinforcing the central role reflection plays in the preparation of many teachers (Jay and Johnson 2002).

As a result of studies conducted on reflection, it is claimed that it should start from the early stages when we are being trained to become language teachers (Orlova 2009; Larrive 2008). According to Rodman (2010:20), 'it is a major responsibility of teacher education to facilitate a reflective, self-monitoring practice and to promote such a practice as a critical and active habit that improves the pre-service teachers' pedagogical ability.' The same author (citing Moon 2004) states that reflective engagement helps pre-service teachers (hereafter PSTs) to actively consider and reconsider belief and practices that allows them to move toward metacognition in teaching so as to improve their ability to monitor their decisions about what and how they teach. It has been observed in different studies (e.g. Watts and Lawson 2009; Ward and McCotter 2004; Jay and Johnson 2002) that some PSTs do not usually analyse or reflect on their performance during or after their practices, remaining at a simply descriptive level of reflection. Kwan and Simpson (2010:417) state that this is because 'reflection usually begins with an unstructured approach

[...] which may not enable the teacher to move from a mere “thinking” process to a higher level of reflection and action’.

Taking into account studies previously carried out and my own interest in investigating how reflection can be fostered and improved, in the current study I explored the way in which PSTs of an English Language Major (hereafter ELM) reflected on their practicum during the last year of their training as English teachers. Based on the results of an exploratory phase in which I identified the focus and the level of reflection of the PSTs, I designed an intervention that intended to promote higher levels of reflection through the use of reflective tools and strategies, as well as to foster collaborative and dialogic reflection, a non-threatening environment, and an enquiry approach (see 5.6.3 for details).

1.1 Rationale for the study

My motivation for this study originated from my personal view of the importance of reflecting on the teaching practice with the purpose of improving it. My interest in the topic increased when I started observing students of the ELM, at the University of Quintana Roo (hereafter UQRoo), who aim to become English teachers. For almost ten years, I have been teaching subjects related to teaching practice that the PSTs at my university have to join during the last year and a half, before they graduate and start working as teachers. When I started teaching the subjects *Materials design* and *Teaching Practice 1*, I became more interested in finding ways to help the PSTs enhance their teaching practice and in providing more reflective methods to help them improve reflection, as well as helping them to become aware of the benefits of reflection. As an educator in a public university and in a programme that prepares future teachers in my state, I have been exposed to pre-service teachers’ written reflective journals of what they did and

observed during the last year of the degree. When I analysed those journals, I noticed that the reflections were mainly a report and a description of the classes and materials used. For this reason, I started to incorporate at least one group session a month to talk about their experiences during the observations and teaching opportunities in order to make them aware, implicitly, of the importance of reflecting on various aspects related to teaching English. These sessions provided the PSTs with a good opportunity not only to describe their classes but also to reflect on and talk about their teaching experience. For instance, they analysed possible reasons to certain discipline disruptions, how they faced those situations and why they made a specific decision on the matter; they also tried to find solutions in collaboration with their peers.

My personal interest stemmed from the experience I had with the group sessions and my desire to know more about how the PSTs internalise, reflect on, and co-construct their knowledge and practice. Moreover, I believe it is important to foster the idea of continuing development through a personal analysis of needs and strengths as teachers; this would give a deeper understanding of what they do as professionals, mainly because the ELM cannot provide all the necessary information. My initial impression during the group sessions was that students had the potential to become reflective students. Therefore, continuing with my original idea, I aimed to help the PSTs improve the level of reflection (from a descriptive level to a critical level) with the help of tools, and strategies, as well as some elements to trigger reflection: collaborative and dialogic reflection, constant enquiry and a non-threatening environment.

1.2 Research participants

The participants of the study were students enrolled in the last year of the ELM of the UQRoo, a Mexican public university in the state of Quintana Roo. At that stage, the student teachers had already studied all the theoretical (and, in some cases, practical) classes in which they learn fundamental information on *Sociolinguistics*, *Psycholinguistics*, *Phonology and phonetics*, *English grammar*, *History of the English language*, *English literature*, *Philosophy of education*, *Teaching technology*, *Materials design*, and *Methods and approaches to teaching English*. This study was carried out with students of compulsory courses *Teaching practice 1* (Autumn 2013 term) and *Teaching practice 2* (later, in Spring 2014 term). For the first phase of the study (exploratory and descriptive), I included journals of 27 students of the *Teaching Practice 1* course. I interviewed 6 students and administered a questionnaire to 30 students. For the second phase of the study, when taking the *Teaching Practice 2* course, 8 agreed to participate in the activities I explain in the methodology chapter. The participants range in age from 22 to 25.

1.3 Research questions

This study sought to answer research questions in two phases of the research:

First phase: Exploratory

The research questions (RQs) of this first stage were as follows:

- ◆ **RQ1:** How do PSTs of the English language major at the University of Quintana Roo engage in reflection?
- ◆ **RQ2:** What level of reflection do they show in their journals during the exploratory phase?

The first RQ sought to focus on how the pre-service teachers reflected on their teaching practice during the first phase of the study; that is, what were the habits they had in order to get involved into reflection: when and how they engaged in reflection, what were the tools and strategies they used to reflect, and what they wrote about. Additionally I intended to learn about what their opinion about reflective practice was. The second RQ aimed to find out the level of reflection that the pre-service teachers had during the exploratory phase of the study: did they show a non-reflective, descriptive, comparative or critical level of reflection? (see 3.2.6 for more details on levels).

Second phase: Intervention

The RQ of this second stage was:

- ◆ **RQ3:** What are the effects of the intervention on the PSTs reflections?

RQ3 investigates the effects of the intervention in terms of:

- Focus of reflection: What topics did the PSTs reflect on?
- Process of reflection: What was the manner in which the PSTs reflected upon the various aspects of their teaching practice?
- Level of reflection: Was there any sign of reflection development or improvement in the level of reflection?
- Tools and strategies: How did the PSTs feel while using different tools/strategies? Which one(s) did they prefer?
- Effects of values promoted: What were the effects of dialogic and collaborative reflection in the PSTs reflective practice? How did they feel and react to the enquiry approach? How did they feel and react to the non-threatening atmosphere?

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In this first chapter, I have provided background information and the purpose and rationale of the study. Moreover, I included the research questions and a brief description of the participants. Chapter Two outlines the context in which the study took place: the state, the institution, and the ELM organization. Chapter Three presents the literature review of the main topic of the thesis: history of reflection, definition of reflection, levels, tools and strategies of reflection. Chapter Four focuses on the methodology, and describes and discusses the instruments used during the action research and data collection. Chapter Five focuses on the description and analysis of the main findings and themes that emerged in the preliminary phase of the study. After that, the findings of the intervention phase are analysed in chapter Six. Chapter Seven summarises and discusses the main findings in the study. In Chapter eight, I conclude with the contributions, limitations and the recommendations for future research, derived from the study.

Chapter Two: The context of the study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the context in which this study was carried out. It provides a general description of the status and importance of English teachers in México and the state of Quintana Roo. It also presents an overview of the institution where the study took place: UQRoo and the English Language and Education Department (ELED). Some actions that the ELM has undertaken during recent years with the objective of developing a high-quality programme for educating English teachers are described too. The chapter finishes by briefly describing the organization of the ELM and the subjects it comprises.

2.2 National panorama of English teachers

For decades, English has been a privilege for public high schools and universities, and private schools in Mexico. However, lower levels of the public educational system in the country were excluded. In 2007, a national project was initiated by the Ministry or Secretariat of Public Education in México (Secretaría de Educación Pública, hereafter SEP) as a pilot programme that later became a National English Programme in Basic Education (NEPBE) (Polanco and Valdez 2009). This programme aims to include the learning of English in basic schools in the country, namely kindergartens and primary schools, 'to raise the quality of education so that students improve their level of educational achievement, to have a means of accessing to a better well-being and thus, to contribute to the national development' (NEPBE 2011:54).

Due to the increasing interest and awareness of the importance of English, universities in Mexico are motivated to help and propose new approaches to

language teaching and English teachers' training or education. Nowadays, more research in the area of teaching a language is being developed in the country (Ramirez-Romero 2007), and more Mexican universities are leading and supporting research on language teaching. In 2006, some universities that offer a bachelor degree related to the teaching of foreign languages (including the UQRoo) started a university network named Red de Cuerpos Académicos en Lenguas Extranjeras, RECALE (Research groups network in foreign languages). The aim of this network is for universities to assist each other in improving their curricula by sharing the research they conduct, as well as doing interdisciplinary research that would enrich the various programmes of study (Murrieta et al. 2007). The need for well-prepared English teachers is increasing in Mexico and, as a consequence, the preparation of effective English teachers is also an important objective for universities in various states of the Mexican Republic. Quintana Roo is certainly not an exception to this, and educational authorities have been promoting the teaching of English due to the importance of the language in the state. As a result, the preparation of English teachers has also been a necessary subject to focus on.

2.3 State of Quintana Roo panorama

Quintana Roo is geographically located in the Southeast of the Mexican Republic, next to an English-speaking country: Belize. It is also considered one of the most important touristic destinations in Mexico. Given its geographical and economic situation, the government in the state has been historically engaged in providing integral education that includes the learning of English as a foreign language. As a result, Quintana Roo was one of the first states in the country to adopt the pilot programme NEPBE and is still implementing it in most of its public primary schools and some public kindergartens (Polanco & Valdez 2007:201). The SEP in the state, through the NEPBE, has been concerned with providing most of the schools with

well-prepared English teachers who are part of the Programme in Quintana Roo, since 'evidence demonstrates that a high percentage of the current EFL teachers throughout the state of Quintana Roo do not hold credential [sic] on ELT, which in part originates "weaknesses" in their professional practice' (Negrete-Cetina 2009:660). One possible explanation of this is that, some years ago, most English teachers in the state were hired because they were fluent speakers of English or native speakers. They were not necessarily trained to be English teachers. Therefore, one of the requirements of the NEPBE nowadays is that teachers must have a Bachelor in Arts (degree) in English language teaching, or have undergone a course and a test in teaching skills such as the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) by Cambridge English Language Assessment. According to Polanco (email communication 14th February 2013), the NEPBE is providing English teachers in about 112 public schools in Quintana Roo. Most of the English teachers working for the NEPBE these days have graduated from the UQRoo (personal oral communication with Raúl Polanco, former State Coordinator of the NEPBE, 2012). According to Polanco, the undergraduates from the UQRoo have proved to be better prepared than experienced teachers who did not receive any type of pedagogical training. This fact emphasises how important it is for the UQRoo to educate English teachers that have an essential role in the NEPBE.

2.4 The University of Quintana Roo

The governor of the state in 1991 created the UQRoo as *The New Mexican University* on the 24th of May. It was named the *New Mexican University* because of the philosophy of education it proposed, which was different from other universities in the country in that decade: flexible curricula and holistic education. The UQRoo looks for a complete and humanistic development of its students: one who is bodily and emotionally healthy and involved in cultural activities; one who

learns and is aware of the social issues in the community, the country and the world.

The university has three campuses (also named Units) in three different cities of the state: Chetumal (main campus), Cozumel, and Playa del Carmen. Each unit is structured by Divisions (the equivalent to Schools) that have a Department structure. The ELM belongs to the ELED of the Division of Political Sciences and Humanites (División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades, DCPH).

2.4.1 Organisation of the ELED and the ELM.

A Head of the Department leads the group of lecturers and teachers within it (Figure 1). The ELED has two groups of researchers (known as Cuerpos Académicos, CAs) who are also the lecturers of the ELM. They applied to be full-time researchers and professors and have a PhD level or, at least, an MA in Education, or Language Teaching, or Applied Linguistics. Lecturers who have not applied to be full time teachers are Part-time teachers with an MA or a BA.

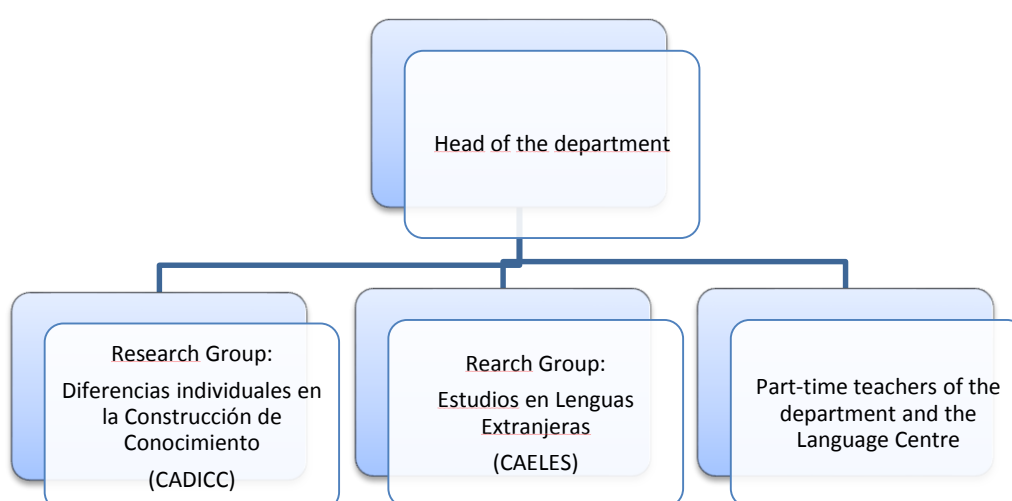


Figure 1: Organisation of the ELM.

As stated in the Statute of Academic Personnel of the University of Quintana Roo (<http://www.uqroo.mx/nuestra-universidad/documentos>), all full-time researchers

and professors are obliged to undertake the following activities, among many others:

- ❖ Teach in the BA and the MA programmes (if a PhD degree)
- ❖ Be tutors of a group of students
- ❖ Be part of a CA and research collaboratively on themes related to the programme and the research groups' interests

The ELM has been in a constant process of evaluations and modifications due to the need of the institution for improvement of the plan of studies (hereafter PS). In 2005 the Comité Interinstitucional para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior (Inter-institutional committee to evaluate higher education, CIEES by its acronyms in Spanish) evaluated the ELM. Another evaluation by a national institution was carried out in 2010 by the Consejo para la Acreditación de Programas Educativos en Humanidades (Board to Certify Educative Programmes in Humanities, COAPEHUM). In 2007, in the time between the CIEES and COAPEHUM evaluations, there was an internal evaluation of the Programme to actively monitor the Department's follow-up to the modifications proposed by the first body of evaluation. Some suggestions in order to improve the major were related to teaching practice contents, hours of teaching instruction, and students' profile, among others.

The academy of lecturers of the ELM have been redesigning the PS in recent years, taking into account the recommendations of the national bodies of evaluation. However, the process has taken more time than expected due to a parallel process of redefinition of the university Educative Model (Modelo Educativo), which was approved in 2014 and is still in the process of implementation. In the meantime, it is the official PS of 1995 that regulates the

major, although some modifications have been done to the programmes. For instance, the objectives of all the programmes have been revised and modified, and the *Teaching practice* programmes have been given more time to teaching practice in real contexts.

2.4.2 Organisation of the Plan of Study

The PS of the ELM, like most of the majors in the UQRoo, is a five-year programme to be completed in 10 terms. Each term lasts four months or sixteen weeks of instruction. Depending on the subject, each course includes between 64 and 128 hours during a term. The hours of instruction are accompanied by hours of independent work for the students of the ELM in most of the subjects, mainly the ones related to the English language classes and the teaching practice courses. The PS is divided into four major types of subjects (Figure 2), called *Block of subjects*.

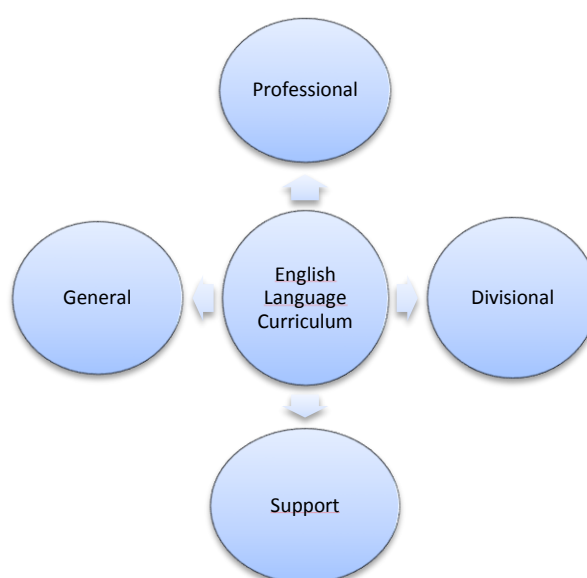


Figure 2: Block of subjects of the English language degree

These blocks of subjects are designed to fulfil the objectives declared in the Mission of the University, which follows a holistic approach to educate its students:

First, the integral training of the student implies establishing an accurate balance between general and professional training, [...] and between humanistic and scientific training. Secondly, it means a diversified and harmonious development of the student's talents, entrepreneur and problem-solving skills; reflection, and systematic and objective analysis [...]. Finally, a personal development is an imperative goal in the students' training. The university will encourage [...] self-improvement, values, moral and personal interests as well as developing his group work commitment.

(Modelo Educativo 2012:13, Translated from Spanish)

The block of subjects are defined as follows and the PSTs need to complete 335 credits (at least):

Divisional: Subjects that aim to introduce students to the social sciences and emphasize the interdisciplinary work (26 to 50 credits): e.g. *Research methods in social sciences*, *World literature*, and *Society and culture in Mexico*, among others.

General: Subjects that are provided to the students to strengthen knowledge on basic subjects (32 to 42 credits) such as *Mathematics*, *Spanish writing*, *Ethics*, and *Regional problems*.

Support: These are subjects especially designed to look for the personal development of the students (20 credits): sports, cultural activities, and foreign language learning.

Professional: They are related to the main purpose of the major; that is, the preparation of English teachers (223 to 261 credits). This block is subdivided into the following categories and subjects (Figure 3):

Spanish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Comprehension • Spanish grammar • Advance Writing in Spanish
English Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English (levels I to VIII) • Comparative Analysis English/Spanish • Listening and Speaking in English • Reading and Writing in English
Linguistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General linguistics • Psycholinguistics • Sociolinguistics • Phonology and Phonetics • English Grammar (levels I and II)
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language History • English Literature (I and II) • Life and Culture of the United States and the United Kingdom
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research seminar
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophy of Education • Technology in Education • Methods and Approaches to Teach English • Materials Design • Teaching Practice (I and II)
Translation or French	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation (levels I to IV) • French (levels I to IV)

Figure 3: Subjects of the 'Professional focus' Block.

The subjects related to the teaching practice are assembled at the end of the major. This is the moment in which students start their practicum, teaching observations and reflective practice.

2.4.3 The teaching practice

The programmes of the teaching subjects focus on the elements and sequence of a lesson plan, teaching of skills and sub-skills, adequate materials to teach, classroom management, and teaching strategies, among others. The PSTs are asked to write lesson plans, reports of their observations, and reflection journals of their practice. The PSTs begin their training as teachers in the classroom when they are completing *Philosophy of education*, *Methods and approaches* and *Materials design* subjects. For these courses, they present part of their lesson plans in front of their peers, considering hypothetical situations (micro-teaching).

Also they observe other English teachers, mainly in the UQRoo. For *Teaching practice 1* and 2, they face real situations in real classes by observing teachers and by teaching (one or two hours a week) in various public and private schools, at different educative levels. They observe a wide variety of teaching styles (from the teachers observed) and have a panorama of how to deal with students of different English levels and ages, as well as groups of different sizes.

As I mentioned at the beginning, one of the aims of this chapter was to provide an overview of the context of the institution in which my study took place. It is important for me to present information, such as the Mission of the UQRoo, in order to illustrate that this study was also congruent with what is stated in this institution. For instance, the Mission declares that the University encourages the reinforcement of students' personality and characteristics by training professionals, diversifying development of the students' talents and problem-solving skills, and seeking for their personal development. These actions were undertaken during the intervention phase of my study since I intended to look for improvement of students' teaching practice and to promote teacher development through reflection (as explained in the next chapter, section 3.2). Likewise, showing an overview of the process of re-designing the PS, helps me justify one of the reasons to conduct this study: to help in the improvement of the PS through the understanding of how reflection works in my context and make a proposal for its implementation, as it has been intended after analysing and evaluating possible solutions to improve the teaching practice subjects in the UQRoo.

Chapter Three: Review of literature

As a means to understand the various views and concepts of reflective practice (hereafter RP) that have emerged over time (and that are integrative of my study), in this chapter I provide a theoretical background by reviewing the literature on the development of the concept of reflection and its elements in the last century. This review starts with Dewey's modern concept of RP. I then discuss van Manen's three-stages model of reflection, Schön's model of reflection, and finally present some recent concepts provided by various researchers. The second part of this chapter includes an analysis of the importance and impact of RP as a core component of teachers' development, indicating the relationship between RP and teachers' development. The terms 'professional development' and 'teacher development' are compared in order to reveal potential similarities. I include the following aspects that can be considered by teachers in their RP: the qualities of reflection and qualities of reflective practitioners; some classifications of levels, dimensions, and frameworks proposed by researchers in order to engage in reflective practice; a description of the role of collaboration in the process of reflecting; the impact of RP; and the possible foci of reflection. Some drawbacks and critical perspectives on RP are also included.

3.1 A brief history on reflection

The origins of reflection can be traced back to the last century with John Dewey's contribution (1910), followed by that of Habermas (1971), Stenhouse (1975), and van Manen (1977) (Zwozdiak-Myers 2009). Influenced by Dewey's work, Schön (1983) extended ideas about reflection and provided new conceptual thinking. In this section, I intend to provide a summary of the main contributions made by Dewey and more recent researchers.

3.1.1 Dewey's proposal

In 1910, Dewey introduced the concept of the *training of thought* and took into consideration some arguments and ideas that are currently used by different authors and researchers when referring to RP. These ideas and arguments are central in my study and are developed in the following sections. Dewey also incorporates what some recent researchers have described as levels of reflection, which is one of the main foci of the present study.

Dewey's book *How We Think* (1910) has been a vital contribution because it states important ideas related to reflection and reflective thought at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Dewey (1910:3), 'reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas but a consequence'. Dewey views reflection as a series of steps; each step supports the next and leads to the creation of new ideas in order finally to draw conclusions. To be able to deduce something, Dewey (1910:4) indicates that thoughts, influenced by individual experiences and perceptions of everyday life, stimulate beliefs in two ways: either 'by acceptance or rejection of something as reasonably probable or improbable' after a mindful analysis of facts. Based on this premise of acceptance or rejection, Dewey makes an important distinction between action that is routine and action that is reflective. Dewey (ibid) states that impulse, tradition, and authority basically guide routine action. Routine usually makes teachers accept uncritically what their institution has established as the correct way of teaching a class; 'they usually lose sight of the purpose and ends toward which they are working and become merely the agents of others' (Zeichner and Liston 1996:9). Reflective action, as opposed to routine, is an 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends (Dewey 1910:6, 1933:7). Reflective action is a holistic way of meeting and

responding to problems in which, in contrast to routine, reason, and emotion are engaged (Dewey 1933). As Greene (1986) indicates, while supporting Dewey, reflection involves emotion and passion and is not based on a set of techniques for teachers to use. Furthermore, 'an emotion and a passion can be a transformation of the world. It can break through the fixities; it can open to the power of possibility. It may even render practice more reflective' (Greene 1986:81). In order to support the involvement of reason and emotion, Dewey (1933, also cited in Farrell 2008; Jay and Johnson 2002) draws attention to particular qualities that could be linked to ways of thinking, and are clearly linked to actions directed toward a critical examination of our teaching practice. These qualities are:

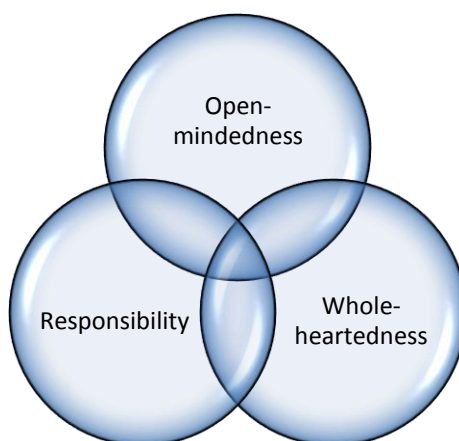


Figure 4: Qualities of a reflective practitioner (Dewey 1933)

- ❖ *Open-mindedness* is a desire to listen to more than one side of an issue and fully embrace and give attention to alternative options. An open mind is there in order to question, challenge, doubt and also look for evidence for a change.
- ❖ *Responsibility* involves the 'disposition to carefully consider the consequences of actions and willingness to accept those consequences' (Dewey 1933:32). Responsible teachers consider three kinds of consequences: personal, academic, and social and political (Pollard and Tann 1993).

- ❖ *Whole-heartedness* ‘implies that teachers ‘can overcome fears and doubts to critically evaluate their practice in order to make meaningful change’ (Farrell 2008:1). Teachers who are whole-hearted usually analyse their own beliefs and the results of their actions with the attitude that they can learn new things from that examination and the experience.

Dewey (1933) considers these qualities to be both a requirement of and integral to reflective action (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012; Calderhead 1993). Nevertheless, Dewey does not suggest that reflective teachers have to reflect on everything all the time. He recommends finding a balance between reflection and routine, because there could be some institutional constraints that interfere with teachers’ work, such as pressure to follow a required teaching method or to cover a specific number of topics. Zeichner and Liston (1996:13) declare that ‘without some routine, without some secure assumptions, we would be unable to act or react’, which leads me to conclude that, although teachers can maintain some routine actions, these actions inevitably force teachers to reflect on what they do habitually. That is, teachers’ motivation to think critically may be implicit in their daily work, and that thinking makes them accept or reject assumptions or beliefs. According to Dewey, since thinking involves acceptance or rejection, this implies having:

- a. a certain store of experiences and facts from which suggestions proceed;
- b. promptness, flexibility, and fertility of suggestions; and
- c. orderliness, consecutiveness, appropriateness in what is suggested.

(1910:30)

Dewey states that a person should seek crucial materials or experiences through curiosity, suggestions, and orderliness (Figure 5). For Dewey (1910:6–10), *suggestion* refers to the thought or idea resulting from what we observe, notice, feel, know, and believe about something. In order to clarify the meaning of suggestion, Dewey provides an example that he calls ‘a rudimentary case of

thinking, lying between careful examination of evidence and a mere irresponsible stream of fancies' (1910:6). For example, a man who is walking on a warm clear day suddenly notices that the air is cooler, and it occurs to him that it is probably going to rain; then, looking up, he sees a dark cloud obscuring the sunshine, so he decides to quicken his steps. According to Dewey, the likelihood that it will rain is something *suggested*. The pedestrian *feels* the cold; he *thinks of* clouds and a coming shower.

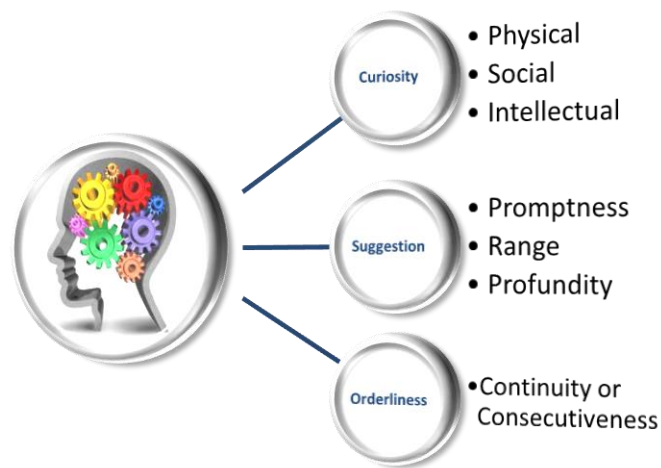


Figure 5. Natural resources in training thought (Dewey 1910)

1. *Curiosity*: is influenced by physical, social, and/or intellectual stimuli that provoke genuine interest in problems observed.
2. *Suggestion*: involves three dimensions:
 - a) *Readiness or facility*: how easily (or not) individuals react to those objects or events.
 - b) *Range*: related to readiness for suggestions but depends on the variety of full and rich in meaning of suggestions.
 - c) *Depth*: entails an intrinsic quality of the response: 'One man's thought is profound while another's is superficial' (Dewey 1910:37).

3. *Orderliness*: implies that suggestions are organized and arranged 'with reference to one another and to the facts on which they depend for proof' (Dewey 1910:39).

Dewey (1910) introduces the influence of experiences, social factors, and beliefs in individuals' processes of reflection. This suggests the importance of considering individuals' own concerns regarding the problems they experience in their daily practice and the willingness to solve specific situations as part of their professional growth. As Zwozdiak-Myers points out:

Central to your development as a teacher is your commitment and capacity to analyse and evaluate what is happening in your lessons and to use your professional judgement both to reflect and act upon these analysis and evaluations to improve pupil learning and the quality of your teaching.

(Zwozdiak-Myers 2012:3)

Dewey expresses the viewpoint that if an individual knows about some specific topic or information but has no attitudes and habits of analysis or discrimination of facts and beliefs, 'he is not intellectually educated; he lacks the rudiments of mental discipline' (1910:28). Therefore, it is required to supply conditions that cultivate the formation of those habits by *proving* or *testing* the suggestions arisen. Dewey (1933) identifies five phases of thinking that an individual must reflect on to prove something (Figure 6):

<i>Problem</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is related to having a big panorama rather than discrete, small entities on their own and identifying the real source of concern. By 'recognising and understanding the complexity of a situation, a plan of action can be intellectualised and thought through more fully' (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012:34)
<i>Suggestions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporate the possibilities and ideas that come to mind when confronted by a confusing situation
<i>Reasoning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involves connecting ideas, information and previous experiences in order to extend the knowledge of the subject
<i>Hypothesis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reconsiders a suggestion in terms of how it can be used and what can be achieved with it. 'Acting upon a working hypothesis involves examining how it stands up to tentative testing, considering more information and undertaking more observations' (Dewey 1933:110)
<i>Testing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the stage at which the hypothesis is tested and the results are used either to corroborate or negate the conjectural idea.

Figure 6: Phases or states of thinking according to Dewey (1933)

In these phases of thinking, Dewey emphasises the importance of orderliness, and also pays special attention to being systematic in order to cultivate the habit of training the thought or reflecting. He says that 'reflective thinking is closely related to critical thinking; it is the turning over of a subject in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration' (1933:3).

Another notion that Dewey (1910) incorporates is the concept of *depth* to describe the profundity of thinking or responses towards different objects or events (profound versus superficial thought): 'One [man] goes to the roots of the matter, and another touches lightly its most external aspects' (1910:37). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the idea of *depth* in our thinking has been used in recent studies and research on reflection to describe different levels of reflection (e.g. Fat'hi and Behzadpour 2011; Larrive 2008; Lee 2008; Jay and Johnson 2002). Interestingly, when Dewey explains his view about *depth*, he acknowledges that the profundity of a thought does not depend on the promptness or the lack of it in the

response: either when an individual responds quickly to an enquiry or takes his or her time to respond, the depth of the thinking is not guaranteed. Dewey states that the response depends on many individual factors.

Both historically and conceptually, Dewey provides the basis for the notion and value of RP. However, other researchers have 'embraced the notion of reflection and have helped us to see more clearly how it can operate in our daily work lives' (Zeichner and Liston 1996:14).

3.1.2 Contributions on reflective practice

Several theorists build upon Dewey's work, offering concepts and arguments on RP and its implications. In this section, I provide chronologically some examples of researchers and theorists' work on the theme.

In 1971, for instance, Habermas (cited in Zwozdiak-Myers 2009:33) 'devised a model of *knowledge constitutive interests* to distinguish between technical, social science, and emancipatory interests of people, which guide and shape human knowledge with their characteristic processes of inquiry'. These processes have the purpose of understanding the environment in which they live through empirical and analytical scientific explanation, associated with human behaviour and forms of communication, and critical and evaluative modes of thought and examination. Zwozdiak-Myers (2009:33) states that 'Habermas' model suggests RP is hierarchical, that knowledge must initially be developed by instrumental or interpretive means before a critical overview of that knowledge or processes that have led to its generation are possible.' According to Zwozdiak-Myers (2009) and van Manen (1977), Habermas' reflective form of reasoning (based on a fundamental mode of enquiry) resonates with critical theory that emerges from the process of critique and evaluation, and scrutinises how and from which viewpoints

interpretations have arisen. Van Manen (1977) says that Habermas

articulates a critical paradigm for describing, understanding, and improving the quality of human life. That paradigm implies a commitment to an unlimited inquiry, a constant critique, and a fundamental self-criticism that is vital to the critical tradition he furthers.

(van Manen 1977:221)

Habermas' ideas coincide with Dewey's (1910) initiative of cultivating *curiosity* (influenced by physical, social and/or intellectual stimuli), and *proving* suggestions (Dewey, 1933), or evaluating. Both authors emphasise the importance of basing the evaluation on various sources of theories. Another researcher who states that enquiry is fundamental in the development of a professional is Stenhouse (1975). He declares that the main characteristic of extended professionals (originally introduced by Hoyle in 1974) is the capacity and commitment they have to engage in systematic self-study. Stenhouse classifies five key attributes to describe those extended professionals as they research their own practice:

1. Need to reflect critically and systematically on their practice.
2. Should have a commitment to question their practice and this should be the basis for teacher development.
3. Should have the commitment and the skills to study their own teaching and, in so doing, develop the art of self-study.
4. Might benefit from their teaching, being observed by others and discussing it with them in an open and honest manner.
5. Should have a concern to question and to test theory in practice.

(Stenhouse 1975:143–144)

As can be observed, the five attributes exposed by Stenhouse involve more specific terms considered in reflection: the professionals' need of *self-study*, *self-reflection*, and what he calls *supportive cooperative research* (1975:159). Stenhouse (1975) asserts that teachers need to be encouraged to develop RP in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of their own teaching in relation to their own experience, as also reckoned by Dewey (1910). Stenhouse points out that professionalism of teachers could be significantly improved if they adopted the

role of *teachers as researchers* by doing action research. He indicates that classroom research is about bettering classroom experience, while the effectiveness and quality of the teaching and curriculum development 'depends upon the capacity of teachers to take a research stance to their own teaching' (1975:156); that is, a willingness to analyse one's own practice critically and systematically (also proposed by Dewey, 1933). Additionally, he proposes that teachers need to report their work and communicate with peers in order to help each other to modify erroneous assumptions and bad habits in their practices. With this, teachers should include observations *to* others and *by* others as part of their reflexive exercise. Stenhouse emphasises the importance of cultivating habits, as Dewey mentions.

Van Manen (1977), another pioneer of reflectivity (cited, for instance, in Ballard et al. 2010; Lee 2008; Reagan et al. 1993), states that teachers should be concerned about both showing other people their educational actions and using various techniques to achieve their goals in the classroom. According to van Manen (1977:206, citing Schwab 1969), 'educators must be aware of the many alternative and competing theories that can be brought to bear on practical situations'. Van Manen insists on the practicality of teachers' work. In 1977, van Manen introduces a 3-stage model, following sequential levels in which one level must address the needs of each level before proceeding to the next: (Technical, Practical, and Critical rationalities) (see 3.2.6). The model proposed by van Manen classifies the process of reflection by following a sequence; that is, from a practical level preceding the second level to finally achieve a higher or critical level of rationality. This is similar to Habermas' model of RP (1971), which indicates that it should be hierarchical and that knowledge must initially be developed by instrumental or interpretive means before a critical overview. A parallel can be drawn between

Dewey and van Manen when they propose different levels of reflection: Dewey's (1910) introduction of the term of *Depth* and van Manen's (1977) presentation of his three-stage model. Even though Dewey and Habermas introduce the need for teachers and professionals to consider experiences, beliefs, and the classroom context as important factors in the analysis of their practice, van Manen adds the notions of ethical and moral dimensions in different aspects (social, cultural, and political) as part of a higher level of reflection.

After some follow-up to and expansion of Dewey's work and notions by other theorists, Schön (1983, 1987:28) introduces some important concepts in the field of RP. One of them is *knowing in action* or *intelligent action*, which implies that many experienced teachers respond effectively in particular situations and cannot articulate what they know, but simply use that knowledge and past experiences as a frame for action: 'we reveal it [knowledge] by our spontaneous, skilful execution of the performance; and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit' (Schön, 1987:25). Schön argues that teachers should separate what they know from what they do in order to become more effective in their work, and this re-framing involves setting problems as well as solving them. This form of *knowing in action* is aligned to *reflection in action* (1983:49–50), which is the reflection that happens at the moment of the class, when the teacher solves a problem or dilemma. Schön describes this as teachers drawing on their repertoire of knowledge, skills, and understanding of a situation so that they can change direction and operate differently in the classroom. In other words, the teacher uses the experience and knowledge to seek alternatives in the classroom in response to the pupils' needs. Nevertheless, as Zwozdiak-Myers (2012:39) states, 'Schön recognises that many professionals find it difficult to reflect on practice as whatever language they use, descriptions of practice will always be constructions'. Accepting

the difficulty that some professionals face when trying to reflect *in* action, Schön proposes *reflection on action* which takes place after the event or teaching session and is a more deliberate and conscious process. There is more critical analysis and evaluation of the actions and what might have happened if a different course of action had taken place:

This enables you to gain control of your teaching and develop “artistry” as reflection on action encourages the questioning of principles and theories which underpin what you do, and the engaging in the conscious exercise of discernment as you provide reasons to support the judgements you make.

(Zwozdiak-Myers 2012:39)

It can be observed that Schön (1983, 1987) emphasises that reflection can be both during and after the practice to provide the practitioners with different perspectives. Similar to Dewey (1910), Habermas (1971), and van Manen (1977), Schön also proposes that practitioners should use previous knowledge, as well as questions, and relate different theories to their practice in order to trigger new and useful insights in their profession. ‘Although Schön had a great impact on efforts to develop reflective teaching practice throughout the world, his ideas have been criticized on several grounds’ (Zeichner and Liston 1996:18); for instance, his lack of attention to teachers’ collaborative RP (Day 1993). Schön depicts reflection as mostly an individual process rather than taking place within a community. Killian and Todnem (1991, cited in Kwan and Simpson 2010:418) expand Schön’s typology to include reflection-*for*-action, whereby teachers become ‘proactive in making commitments to improve their teaching’.

Following the seminal work of Dewey, Habermas, Stenhouse, van Manen, and Schön, other researchers continue to examine the notions introduced by these theorists. For instance, Boud et al. (1985, also cited in Boud and Walker 1990) see reflection as a personal stance and decision. They capture how reflection and

learning might be linked through defining reflection as an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, analyse it again, and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning (Dewey 1910, Schön 1983). The capacity to reflect is developed in different stages in different people, and it may be this ability that characterises those who learn effectively from experience. This implies that to become informed, purposeful, and thoughtful decision makers, student teachers should be encouraged to question their own actions and background experiences and reconsider personal attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, knowledge, theories, understandings, and values in the light of experience, and, more importantly, the impact it has on themselves and others (Stenhouse 1975). The question *How did I feel?* is introduced in Boud, Keogh and Walker's proposal: *Dimension of feelings*. Another researcher, paying special attention to the reflective teacher as a person who makes his or her own decisions to reflect critically, is Barnett (1997, cited in Zwozdiak-Myers 2009:24), who 'suggests that an important aim for institutions of higher education is to develop the "critical being" –an individual who thinks critically as a way of life and is willing to act on his understandings.' According to Zwozdiak-Myers, Barnett proposes a system that includes both action and critique, and sees the student teacher as a developing person. Furthermore,

Barnett identifies action, self-reflection and understanding, as three key domains that higher education needs to focus on and considers that empowered student teachers to be capable of both critical self-reflection and critical action.

(Zwozdiak-Myers 2009:35)

Another example of a proposal derived from theorists' work is provided by Griffith and Tann (1991, cited in Cox 2005:463), who identify five reflection phases (also acknowledged by Fat'hi and Behzadpour, 2011, as a suggestion made by Zeichner and Liston in 1996):

1. *Rapid reaction*, which occurs instinctively and immediately.
2. *Repair*, which may entail reflection-in-action, but with a brief pause to gather thoughts.
3. *Review*, which implies interpersonal and collaborative reflection and happens after the teacher's work day (reflection-on-action).
4. *Research*, which may take place over weeks or months and is more systematic and focuses on particular issues.
5. *Re-theorize and reformulate* that takes place over months or years and is more abstract and rigorous, and also considers various theories.

These phases are linked to Schön's moments of reflection (reflection *in* and *on* action), but imply a more specific time in which reflection could be done. Apart from the importance of teachers reflecting on different aspects of their context and in various stages or moments of their teaching, during the last few years there has been a special emphasis on how to reflect, as a result of the notions proposed by previous researchers. For example, Ward and McCotter (2004) develop a rubric with the purpose of clarifying the dimensions and qualities of reflection and evaluating teachers' reflection. The rubric is designed to focus on three related questions about pre-service teachers' reflection: First, the quality that distinguishes meaningful reflection; second, the relation of those qualities to a focus on student learning; and third, a description of the qualities 'in such a way as to make them visible and valued outcomes in their own right' (Ward and McCotter 2004:245). Ward and McCotter divide the rubric into four levels: Routine, Technical, Dialogic, and Transformative. For each level, they consider three aspects of the rubric: focus

of concerns about practice, the process of inquiry, and the change the inquiry produces (2004:250) (see 3.2.6 for details).

In a similar vein, Jay and Johnson (2002) propose a typology based on three dimensions of reflection: a) *Descriptive reflection* that implies setting the problem (specific and explicit or vague or implicit), defining the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, and the means to achieve those ends; b) *Comparative reflection*, which means reframing the problem and having different perspectives from different sources; and c) *Critical reflection* that involves making judgements, thinking of one's own understanding, and moving forward to promote change and improvement. In this typology, it is more evident that the historical, socio-political, and moral contexts need to be taken into consideration when reflecting, as initially suggested by van Manen (1977).

Finally, it is worth drawing attention to some useful and supporting frameworks that are a result of the various concepts involved in the process of reflection, from Dewey to the present. A good example of this is the framework proposed by Zwozdiak-Myers (2009, 2012:5), who defines RP as:

a disposition to enquiry incorporating the process through which student, early career and experienced teachers structure or restructure actions, beliefs, knowledge and theories that inform teaching for the purpose of professional development.

Zwozdiak-Myers (2012:4) bases her framework around nine *dimensions of RP* that do not necessarily follow a sequence (although she presents them in a linear manner). She states that 'one dimension can provide the initial catalyst for reflective practice' and that teachers can:

- ❖ Study their own teaching for personal improvement

- ❖ Systematically evaluate their own teaching through classroom research procedures
- ❖ Link theory with their own practice
- ❖ Question their personal theories and beliefs
- ❖ Consider alternative perspectives and possibilities
- ❖ Try out new strategies and ideas
- ❖ Maximise the learning potential of all their students
- ❖ Enhance the quality of their own teaching
- ❖ Continue to improve their own teaching

Zwozdiak-Myers, as other researchers are doing these days, includes most of the notions derived from different theorists and researchers concerning RP that I have described in this first section of the present chapter.

3.2 Teacher development and reflective practice

In this section, I focus on the importance and impact of RP as a core component of teachers' development, indicating the relationship between RP and teachers' development. I include the following aspects that can be considered by teachers in their RP: the qualities of reflection and qualities of reflective practitioners; some classifications of levels, dimensions and frameworks proposed by researchers in order to engage in RP; a brief description of the role of autonomy and collaboration in the process of reflecting; and the impact that RP and teacher development have in PSTs, as they are the subjects of the present study. Some drawbacks and critiques on RP are also included.

3.2.1 Professional development or teacher development

RP, as has been widely acknowledged (e.g. Pollard et al. 2008; Moon 2005; Ghaye

and Ghaye 1998; Calderhead 1989), is an essential element concerning teachers and student teachers' development. In this section I briefly introduce a definition of professional and teacher development. Later, in 3.2.3, I explain how these concepts are related to RP.

According to the literature, there is a slight difference in the definition of professional development and teacher development that is worth considering. Mann (2005:104) states that 'Professional development is career oriented and has a narrower, more instrumental and utilitarian remit'. Teacher development, meanwhile, is more likely to refer to personal and even moral aspects of the individual. This allows the teacher to be seen as the person committed to his/her own development and as the decision-maker of his/her teaching (Zwozdiak-Myer 2012; Edge 2002; Pettis 2002; Zeichner and Liston 1996; Eraut 1994), not just because he/she is part of an institution and is following the institution's request of continuing professional development, which 'is much more of a requirement for all employees of a given organization' (Bowen 2004:1 cited in Mann 2005:105). However, researchers in the educational field see professional development as related to teacher development in the sense that it means to develop as a professional teacher (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012). Day (1999, 1993), for instance, describes professional development as considering both institutional and individual concerns:

[Professional development considers] all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school.

(Day 1999:4)

According to Day (1993), teachers participate in more planned professional development activities than ever before, both as an institutional or as a personal aspiration. Moreover, as Day points out (1993:90), it is paramount that professional

development is prevented from becoming only an institutional concern if the main objective of professional development is 'to encourage learning, to develop and enrich the thinking, cultures and practices of individual teachers and their schools for the practical benefits of their students'. Supporting the value of this imperative, Edge (2002a) refers to the term professional development (PD), or continuing professional development (CPD), as the idea of *self-development* and declares that it contributes in different manners: 'self-development perspective (individual or group development), the management perspective (institution), and the professional body perspective (e.g. IATELF)' (Edge 1999, cited in Mann 2005:105). In order to emphasise the relation between the terms, Edge (2002a) states that there is a potential for connection between professional development and personal development:

If you can become more aware of your own aptitudes, preferences, and strengths and use them in your teaching, you might not only develop your own best style of teaching you might also develop as a type of person that you want to be.

(Edge 2002a:7)

It might be difficult to make a distinction between professional development and teacher development as they both might consider a personal and a professional stance to engage in development. That could be the reason why some researchers in the education field use both terms, professional development and teacher development, interchangeably. Some authors perceive teacher development as part of the professional or continuing professional development (Edge 2002). That makes sense if we think that, even though continuing our professional development is a requirement from schools or institutions, we can personally or individually decide to take action to grow as teachers.

Another distinction of teacher development that I want to shed light on is the definition of the term from the American and the European views. These emphasise the role of the teacher in engaging in reflection. On the one hand, Mann (2005) argues that the typical North American concept of teacher development is usually carried out by a teacher educator and ‘presented to teachers’. This state of affairs implies that it is not necessarily a personal decision by teachers involved in order to engage in the professional development. On the other hand, the European view ‘foregrounds professional and personal growth that teachers themselves undertake and that is guided by the teachers concerned’ (Mann 2005:104 citing Johnston 2003). For the purpose of this study, I can see that both views overlap because I – as a researcher and educator at the UQRoo – not only presented tools and strategies to PSTs, conducted the study and guided the process of reflection, but also sought for PSTs to pursue professional and personal growth by initiating voluntarily in the process of reflection.

When referring to teacher development, some aspects are considered to be important in order to achieve the goal of developing: participating in group and pair discussions, workshops, demonstrations, attending courses, conferences, and seminars, doing action research, observing others, researching on the topic of concern, and reflecting on practice (Tarrant 2013; Thompson and Thompson 2008). As Dean (1992:7) states, ‘the teacher must actually work to develop [...] development does not happen merely as a result of years of teaching’.

3.2.2 Reflective practice

In this section, I provide an understanding of what reflection is and the implications and benefits of RP. It is important to state that defining reflection has been a difficult task for the various reflective practitioners and motivators of RP because it

implies many things in many ways. Hence, I will try to focus on the meaning of reflection in terms of what it implies for teachers.

Boud et al. (1985) define reflection as ‘an important human activity’ in which people recall their experiences, think about them, give serious consideration and assess them. Boud et al. (1985:19) state that it ‘is this working with experience that is important in learning’. Nevertheless, they note that the unconscious processes involved in thinking about experiences are not enough to raise our learning awareness (Underhill 1992; Gebhard and Oprandy 1999a). Rather, ‘it is only when we bring our ideas to our consciousness that we can evaluate them and begin to make choices about what we will and will not do’ (Boud et al. 1985:19).

There are numerous definitions that attempt to capture the nature of reflection. Most of them coincide with defining it as a process of critically thinking and enquiring into actions, beliefs, knowledge, and theories involved in teaching. Some definitions advise considering the analysis of the teacher’s own context (social, political, economic, moral, and ethical), which will lead them to learn, grow, and develop through actions taken as a result of the reflection process. The following table (1) shows some definitions of reflection in order to have a clearer idea of it. The definitions are presented in chronological order.

Proponent	Reflection is:
Dewey (1933:9)	Active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends... it includes a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of evidence and rationality.
Boyd and Fales (1983:100)	The process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self and results in changed conceptual perspective.
Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985:3)	A generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understanding and appreciation.

Mezirow (1990:104)	The process of critically assessing the content process or premises of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to our experience.
Osterman (1990:134)	Mindful consideration of one's actions, specifically, one's professional actions.
Jarvis (1992:180)	Something more than thoughtful practice. It is that form of practice that seeks to problematise many situations of professional performance so that they can become potential learning situations and so the practitioner can continue to learn, grow and develop in and through practice.
Reid (1993:305)	A process of reviewing an experience of practice in order to describe, analyse, evaluate and so inform learning about practice.
Richards (1995:59)	It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action.
Moon (1999:63)	A set of abilities and skills to indicate the taking of a critical stance, an orientation to problem solving or state of mind.
Chamberlin (2000:353)	Ongoing conversation about teaching that gives teachers the opportunity to uncover the implicit beliefs and experiences that guide their pedagogy.
Korthagen (2001:58)	The mental process of trying to structure or restructure an experience or existing knowledge or insight.
Loughran (2002: 33).	Not just thinking about something, but a well-defined and crafted practice that carries very specific meaning and associated action.
Brant (2008:43)	A recapturing of experience in which the person thinks about it, mulls it over, and evaluates it.
Copland, Ma, and Mann (2009:18)	The ability to analyse an action systematically and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the action in order to improve practice.
Zwozdiak- Myers (2012:5)	A disposition to enquiry, incorporating the process through which student, early career and experienced teachers structure or restructure actions, beliefs, knowledge and theories that inform teaching for the purpose of professional development.

Table 1: Definitions of Reflection

As observed above, while varying in emphasis, the definitions coincide in considering reflection mainly as a conscious process for teachers to take carefully and critically into consideration their actions, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences. Dewey, Reid, Osterman, and Loughran, for instance, pay special attention to the mental process by emphasising that reflection is not just thinking about something, but mindfully analysing and evaluating beliefs, actions and knowledge. Moon and

Jarvis describe it as a solving-problem and a learning opportunity. Zwozdiak-Myers and Korthagen see reflection as an occasion to structure and restructure beliefs and knowledge. Brant, Korthagen, Mezirow, Boud et al., and Boyd and Fales pay special attention to reflection on experience, triggered by the experience itself.

As we can observe in Table 1, Moon's (1999:63) definition of reflection is to some extent vague as she defined it as 'a set of abilities and skills to indicate the taking of a critical stance, an orientation to problem solving or state of mind'. In order to extend her definition of reflection for a better understanding, Moon (1999) points out some characteristics of RP:

- ❖ The subject matter of reflection is likely to be one's own practice, paying more or less attention to the setting of the practice;
- ❖ Reflective practice may refer to reflection on the everyday events of practice or the conditions that shape reflection, such as political influences;
- ❖ Reflection may be ongoing or a reaction to a specific event or an unexpected occurrence or observation of a problem; it is characterised by states of uncertainty; it may have an ethical or moral content;
- ❖ Reflection may have a strong critical element;
- ❖ The end point of reflection in reflective practice may not be resolution of an issue, but attainment of a better understanding of it;
- ❖ Reflection will have involved the process of thinking, but it may be aided by the process of articulation of the thinking orally or in a written form;
- ❖ Review and reconstruction of the ideas surrounding reflection will be aimed at understanding or resolving the issue in the context of a general aim of improving practice, specifically or generally;
- ❖ Still within the overall context of improving practice, the immediate aim may be self-development, professional development, self-empowerment, or empowerment of the educationalist within the political sphere;
- ❖ Reflective practice is usually enhanced when there is some sharing of the reflection with others.

(Moon, 1999:64, vignettes design by researcher)

By describing some characteristics of RP, when Moon (1999) refers to teachers, we observe that she perceives reflection as something more than just a set of skills. Moon sees reflection as the opportunity to improve practice, but also to

promote self-development or professional development or empowerment of the teacher. Moon says that teachers pay attention to their own practice and reflect on specific or unexpected events, sometimes with an ethical and moral content. What is more, Moon indicates that by articulating orally or in written form and sharing with others this may aid reflection; one is not looking for a solution necessarily, but trying to better understand a problem or situation.

The term 'reflective practice' may sound redundant for some people because they might suppose that this is what good teachers routinely do in order to teach: teachers need to think about their teaching and that such thinking could be the same as reflection. The process of 'just thinking' about teaching is not necessarily reflection. Zeichner and Liston (1996:1) clarify the difference, highlighting the contrast between reflective teaching and technical teaching by noting that 'if a teacher never questions the goals and the values that guide his or her work, the context in which he or she teaches, or never examines his or her assumptions, then, this individual is not engaged in reflective teaching'. Zeichner and Liston concur with Dewey's (1910) proposal of routine action and reflective action, as explained in 3.1.1 (also considered by Zwozdiak-Myers 2012, and van Manen 1977). According to Zeichner and Liston (1996), engaging in reflection brings many benefits to our teaching practice. Bolton (2010), supporting the latter authors, argues that reflection enables teachers to learn through personal experiences about themselves, their lives at home and work, and the society and culture in which they are immersed. Bolton (2010:3–4, vignettes design by researcher) declares that some of the benefits teachers get through reflection are:

- ❖ It can provide relatively safe and confidential ways to explore and express experiences that are otherwise difficult to communicate;
- ❖ It challenges assumptions, ideological illusions, damaging social and cultural biases and inequalities, and questions personal behaviours, which perhaps silence the voices of others or otherwise marginalise them.

According to Bolton, another benefit that RP can enable is the *inquiry* into teachers' conscious knowledge; about what they want to learn and what they think, feel, believe, and understand about their role and their boundaries. This form of reflection, according to Bolton's view (2010), seems to enable reflective practitioners to explore and experiment on the context in which they work (e.g. 'how to counteract seemingly given social, cultural and political structures'); to compare their own work with others and to value the perspective and perception that others have about them; and to analyse the impact of their practice depending on their mood (e.g. if one is stressed). Other authors (e.g. Scrivener 2005; Pettis 2002; Bailey, Curtis and Nunan 2001; Murphy 2001; Wallace 1991) also highlight the importance of reflecting and they agree with the fact that being reflective is an essential aspect in adopting teaching strategies and improving our performance, as well as developing a deeper understanding of teaching and self-evaluating our teaching abilities. Moreover, it would be easy to say that reflection is the best solution to improve our teaching and to professionally develop. Nevertheless, this might be a difficult thing to know with exactitude due to the complexity and different variables involved in reflection. As Zeichner and Liston (1996) argue:

if teachers reflect and examine their basic values, are wholehearted and responsible in their concern for their students, are tuned into and have questioned the images that guide their teaching –then they are better teachers, [but] There is the belief that reflective teaching is not necessarily good teaching and that uncritically accepting knowledge and action generated through teacher reflection is problematic because, under some circumstances, more reflection may actually serve to legitimate and strengthen practices that are harmful to some students.

(Zeichner and Liston 1996:48)

Zeichner and Liston make a point about the usefulness (or lack of it) of RP when they indicate that reflection does not necessarily guarantee an improvement in our teaching. As stated by Zuber-Skerritt (1989), teachers in general fall into the habit of just thinking in a superficial way about their teaching without clear guidelines,

and that superficial reflection 'does not help to address genuine concerns that arise from their teaching environment and hence does not bring about any meaningful action to rectify or improve teaching at all' (Kwan and Simpson 2010:417). The lack of depth in reflection and the (possible) lack of usefulness of the practice (e.g. when it can be harmful to some students, as stated by Zeichner and Liston 1996) make me think of the importance of working with others (which will be explained in 3.2.8) to support or dismiss our assumptions and analyse our own actions with the help of others' opinions. The purpose, in my view, is to promote reflection by making teachers aware of the importance of taking mindful considerations of the aspects influencing their practice; the main goal should be to encourage learning and effectiveness through reflection on their teaching practice and experience, as well as on their environment, in order to take action. It is necessary to increase responsibility over their own professional development because 'the outcomes of reflection include learning and action, empowerment and emancipation' (Moon 1999:65).

3.2.3 Reflective practice as core component of teacher development

Tarrant (2013:2) declares that 'it is well documented that to develop as professionals we need to be able to reflect on our practice and to learn from this reflection'. Zwozdiak-Myers (2012) argues that teachers who want to develop are constantly asking questions about their teaching practice, that they reveal a commitment to continuously learn and create or find new ideas, evaluate their practice and reflect on the impact of what they do or do not do, as well as trial new ways of teaching to improve their effectiveness. This approach to teacher development underpins concepts of the teacher as a *reflective practitioner* (Schön 1983, who suggests that the aim to reflect is to engage in the process of continuous learning as one of the defining characteristics of professional practice),

a *researcher* (Kemmis 1985; Stenhouse 1975) and an *extended professional* (Stenhouse 1975, as will be explained in 3.2.4). Zwozdiak-Myers (2012), referring to Stenhouse (1975), states that ‘the outstanding feature of extended professionals is their capacity and commitment to engage in autonomous self-development through systematic self-study, reflection, and research’ (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012:3).

If we think of teachers’ development as the process by which (alone or cooperatively, personally motivated, or because of institutional requirement) teachers ‘*review, renew and extend* their commitment as change agents to the moral [social, political, ethical] purposes of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional *thinking, planning and practicing*’ (Day 1999:4), then RP can be considered a key driver. This is because it fosters the conscious thinking by planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and continuing the spiralling cycle of reflection that promotes teachers’ (or PSTs) engagement in the art of self-development (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012).

3.2.4 Qualities of a reflective teacher

In previous sections, I highlighted some key aspects of reflection from the various definitions provided by different authors, the benefits of reflection, and some potential dilemmas in the process. I am aware that we (reflective practitioners and researchers) must still deal with some of the problems and inconsistencies of RP, but I am also aware that reflection has a potential value for teachers, as argued by Mann and Walsh (2013). According to some researchers (e.g. Zwozdiak-Myers 2012; Osterman 1990; Dewey 1910) the potential comes mainly from one of the key elements in the definition of reflection and, as a result, something that a reflective practitioner has to consider: the need to adopt a critical stance. Moon

(2005:12) states that this capacity to think critically 'relies upon an understanding of knowledge as constructed and related to its context (relativist), which is not possible if knowledge is viewed only in an absolute manner'. If being an effective reflective teacher means having a critical stance, then, how can teachers achieve this? What characteristics do teachers need in order to be considered critical teachers? According to Zeichner and Liston (1996:6, vignettes design added by researcher), a critically reflective teacher is someone who:

- ❖ Examines, frames, and attempts to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice;
- ❖ Is aware of and questions the assumptions and values he or she brings to teaching;
- ❖ Is attentive to the institutional and cultural contexts in which he or she teaches
- ❖ Takes responsibility for his or her own professional development.

Zeichner and Liston's (1996) characteristics of a critically reflective teacher are in agreement with Moon's (2005:12) description of thinking critically, which involves 'an understanding of knowledge as constructed and related to its context'. This understanding, as I see it, can be achieved through the analysis and enquiry of our teaching practice and the context in which we develop, as well as the analysis made when we are involved in curriculum and school development (Zeichner and Liston 1996). However, it seems to me that (especially) the latter activities might be difficult for novice or pre-service teachers to achieve from the beginning of their practicum. This is not only because they usually focus their attention to other aspects of their teaching practice, as I explain in the following section, but also because they might not be required or allowed to participate in this type of activities (e.g. because of their contractual status).

Interestingly, as proposed by Zeichner and Liston (1996), 'critical' teachers also take responsibility of their professional development and seek to solve dilemmas in their classroom. These qualities correspond to the characteristics of a teacher as a

researcher expressed by Stenhouse (1975). Following Hoyle (1972), Stenhouse attempts to identify two types of teachers: as researchers in the concept of *extended professionalism*, and as a complement of *restricted professionalism* (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012). Stenhouse (1975) states that the *restricted professional* can be hypothesised as having the following characteristics:

- ❖ A high level of classroom competence;
- ❖ Student-centredness;
- ❖ A high degree of skill in understanding and handling students;
- ❖ Derives high satisfaction from personal relationships with pupils;
- ❖ Evaluates performance in terms of his own perceptions of changes in pupils behaviour and achievement;
- ❖ Attends short courses of a practical nature.

Stenhouse (1975:143–144, vignettes design added by researcher)

Stenhouse (1975) then indicates that the *extended professional*, in addition to the qualities attributed to the *restricted professional*, has certain skills, perspectives, and involvements that include the following:

- ❖ Views work in the wider context of school, community and society;
- ❖ Has a concern to link theory and practice;
- ❖ Has a commitment to questioning own teaching as a basis for development
- ❖ Has a commitment to some form of curriculum theory and mode of evaluation.

Stenhouse states that the most important characteristic of the extended professional is his or her 'capacity for autonomous professional self-development through systematic self-study, through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures' (Stenhouse 1975:144).

In considering what RP involves, it can be suggested that being an effective reflective teacher requires: being aware of the teaching practice; keeping an open mind and enquiring about *what*, *why*, and *how* we do things; comparing ourselves

to other people's work, ideas, and viewpoints, and seeking feedback; generating choices and possibilities of improvement and viewing our activities and results from various perspectives; being aware of context; challenging our own beliefs and values; assessing the impact of our assumptions; being open to new experiences (Roth 1989; Brookfield 1988). Thus far, it can be observed that the characteristics of a reflective teacher include being immersed in systematic examination and mindful consideration of assumptions, beliefs, and knowledge, taking into account cultural, political, social and moral and ethical aspects surrounding his or her teaching situation. Additionally, reflective teachers are active and responsible teachers looking for effectiveness of their practice. Even though there is a strong emphasis on autonomy, they also consider social interaction as essential (see 3.2.8). Reflection, furthermore, involves intuition, emotion, and passion (Day 2004, 1985; Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985) and 'it is not something that can be classified as a set of techniques for teachers to use' (Greene 1986, cited in Zeichner and Liston 1996:9).

3.2.5 Focus of reflection

As proposed by researchers (e.g. Ur 1999; Zeichner and Liston 1996; Stenhouse 1975), some of the characteristics of an effective reflective teacher are related to the constant enquiry of their teaching practice, which may involve the analysis of everything happening in and outside the classroom. Given that I would carry out this study with students who were being educated to become English teachers, and their possible concerns while reflecting would be the various aspects of the teaching practice (as I had observed in previous years of working with them), I include in this section a brief review of what the literature indicates are the aspects on which we typically base our reflection.

According to Ur (1999), the basis for professional progress is teachers' own reflection on daily classroom events such as classroom management. Valli (1993:14) supports the idea when referring mainly to PSTs and novice teachers: 'Given the difficulties beginning teachers have with discipline and classroom disorder, this focus on the teaching-learning process is not surprising'. In the same vein, the results of a study conducted by Lee and Loughran (2000) with PSTs immersed in a school-based teaching programme in Australia show that student teachers begin focusing their reflection on specific concerns that arise when doing their practices. These concerns varied throughout Lee and Loughran's study, but are mainly focused on the following themes they classify: teachers, students, content, context, pedagogy, classroom management, and assessment. According to the results, even though PSTs reflected on all the topics, they focused their reflection mainly on students, pedagogy and classroom management, displaying greater concern for these themes from the beginning to the end of the study. The themes that received less concern were the content and context of the instruction.

Similar to the aspects classified by Lee and Loughran (2000), Zeichner and Liston (1996) identify what they call traditions of RP in order to exemplify the various aspects on which teachers might focus their reflection. These traditions are more specific than the categories exposed by Lee and Loughran (2000) and each one focuses on different aspects of teaching expertise. According to Zeichner and Liston, 'good teaching needs to attend to all of the elements that are highlighted by the various traditions: the representation of subject matter, student thinking and understanding, research-based teaching strategies, and the social context of teaching' (1996:52). The five traditions identified by Zeichner and Liston (1996:51–62) are:

1. *Academic* tradition: stresses reflection on subject matter and the representation and translation of that subject matter to promote students' understanding.
2. *Social efficiency* tradition: highlights the thoughtful application of teaching strategies according to previous research. Takes advantage of research and teachers' experience, intuition, and their own values.
3. *Developmentalist* tradition: emphasises reflection about students, their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, thinking, and understanding, their interests, and their developmental readiness for particular tasks.
4. *Social reconstructionist* tradition: teaching recognises that instruction is embedded within institutional, cultural, and political contexts and that these contexts affect what we do and are affected by what we do.
5. *Generic* tradition: encourages teachers to reflect about their teaching in general, without much attention to how teachers reflect, what the reflection is about, or the degree to which the teachers' reflection should involve an examination of the social and institutional contexts in which they work.

In the description of each tradition, the elements on which teachers should base their reflection are related to all the areas involved in the teaching (and learning) process: the subject matter to promote effective learning, the use of strategies according to research findings, students' culture, background and individual interests and differences, and the context, among other aspects. Interestingly, Zeichner and Liston's (1996) second tradition puts special emphasis on reflecting on research-based use of teaching strategies. Zeichner and Liston (1996), Moore (2012), and Edge (2002b) all recognise that teachers' practices are influenced in many ways by their practical theories. This theory-practice relationship has been acknowledged by Handal and Lauvas (1987, cited in Zeichner and Liston 1996)

who state that teaching that includes reflection, and which integrates teachers' practical theories with their actual daily action, is necessary. Handal and Lauvas (1987, cited in Zeichner and Liston 1996:38–39) propose that the relation between theory and practice should be reflected before, during, and after the lesson. This reflection will allow teachers to relate what they do to what theory states; it will enable them to question the activities they are about to do with their students, how those activities work or worked (reflection in and on action), the moral and ethical basis of their actions, and how they contribute to a caring classroom environment or to the enhancement of equity and justice.

According to Moore (2012), the reflective teacher, like the reflective learner or PST, may analyse his or her own classroom behaviour, not simply by asking him-/herself about what he or she did correctly or incorrectly, or about what worked well or did not, but also about more important and useful questions such as: why things went wrong or right, how his or her current experiences of life and work influenced behaviour in a particular way, and what was the impact on students and the context of his or her decisions or actions. 'Such questions are reminiscent of three "clusters of reflective activity" singled out by Boud et al. (1985) as being potentially productive in the reflective process: that is to say: *returning to experience*, *attending to feelings*, *re-evaluating experience*' (Moore 2012:125).

Up to this point I have discussed what reflection is, the qualities of good reflective practitioners (which position them as critical reflective teachers), and what the focus of reflection might be. The question is not only on what to reflect, or its qualities, but also what it means to achieve high levels of reflection.

3.2.6 Levels of reflection

It is claimed that teachers and pre-service teachers do not reflect on their practice, or else they do it in a superficial way. What has been observed in different studies (e.g. Kwan and Simpson 2010; Larrivee 2008; Watts and Lawson 2009; Lee 2008; Ward and McCotter 2004; Jay and Johnson 2002) is that those teachers and pre-service teachers do not usually analyse or reflect deeply about their performance during their practices; rather, they simply describe the sequence of the class or plan, the activities included, and the kind of students they work with, remaining at a descriptive level of reflection without considering a better understanding of the situation, the context, the social and political factors influencing the class, as well as moral and ethical implications (Jay and Johnson 2002; Ward and McCotter 2004). As Watts and Lawson (2009:610) indicate, 'beginning teachers find difficulty in evaluating their lessons effectively; their emphasis remains descriptive rather than analytical, and superficial rather than critical'. Apparently, they do not know how to reflect; neither is there a critical analysis of their teaching practice and their students' needs and processes of learning. Kwan and Simpson (2010) emphasise that reflection usually begins with a lack of a structured approach of the process of reflection, the result of which might not enable pre-service teachers to change from a superficial level to a critical one, mainly when it is without clear guidelines. In order to attempt to solve this problem, many researchers define different levels or dimensions of reflection as a way to develop the process of reflection in order to guide teachers and pre-service teachers to a deeper level, and to guide the process itself. Most of the levels (which will be chronologically described in this section) refer to the content, but focus mainly on the depth in which teachers reflect on those contents.

Although different terms are used to refer to the levels or dimensions and various foci of reflection, they all entail developing from a very descriptive and superficial stage. During this stage, the teacher does not need to take up a stance on an issue to a higher level, which involves a critical view and implies empowering teaching practice in which 'the reflective practitioners come to see themselves as agents of change, capable to understanding not only what is, but also working to create what should be' (Jay and Johnson 2002:79). Van Manen's (1977) proposal identifies three levels of reflection:

- ❖ First level: *Technical rationality* consists of the application of previous knowledge in the classroom with the purpose of achieving a specific goal about the teacher's own practice. This application does not involve criticism and the social context is taken for granted: 'The practical in this sense is a concern of ordinary life' (van Manen 1977:206).
- ❖ Second level: *Practical rationality* concerns examining and classifying assumptions, experiences, goals, perceptions, and the objectives of practice, paying special attention to the consequences on students' learning.
- ❖ Third level: *Critical rationality* is characterised by moral and ethical concerns on social, cultural, and political contexts.

The levels distinguished by van Manen are similar to those distinguished by Mezirow (1981) and Carr and Kemmis (1986), who work with categories derived from Habermas (no date provided, cited in Carr and Kemmis 1986). According to the latter authors, Habermas suggests three primary cognitive interests: the technical (concerned with instrumental action), the practical (concerned with the clarification of conditions for communication and intersubjectivity), and the emancipatory (concerned with moral, social, and political reality and its implications for self-knowledge). For both Mezirow and Carr and Kemmis, the emancipatory

interest, or critical level, is more significant and valuable and supersedes the other levels.

Fat'hi and Behzadpour (2011), Cox (2005), and Zeichner and Liston (1996) all refer to Griffiths and Tann's (1992) proposal, which takes a different approach to the one described by van Manen and other researchers (below), in that its main focus is on *when* reflection is done. The five *temporal* dimensions are linked to Schön's (1983) moments of reflection (reflection *in* and *on* action) but indicate a more specific time in which reflection could be done. Griffiths and Tann (1992) provide examples of situations in which teachers can reflect during the various moments. The first two levels are accomplished at the moment of the class (reflection-in-action) and are likely to be personal and private. The last three levels described refer to the reflection teachers do on action and are more likely to be interpersonal and collegial. Now I summarise Zeichner and Liston's (1996) and Griffiths and Tann's (1992) proposal of when and on what situation, respectively, to reflect:

(a) Reflection-in-action:

- I. *Rapid reaction* which occurs instinctively and immediately in an automatic way. For example, the automatic reaction to good behaviour would be to praise the student.
- II. *Repair* that may entail reflection-in-action, although there is pause for thought; it is 'on the spot' and very quick. 'For instance, a child may show an unexpected interest in a piece of work, so the teacher will make the decision to allow her to pursue it rather than carry on with normal work' (Griffiths and Tann 1992:78).

(b) Reflection-on-action:

- III. *Review* which implies interpersonal and collaborative reflection and happens after the teacher's work day – in break time, going home in the car, at the end of the day or the end of the week. 'The teacher will muse over or talk about the progress of a particular group, or a particular child. As a result existing plans for teaching and learning may be modified' (Griffiths and Tann 1992:78).
- IV. *Research* in which the process of collecting information, analysing it, and evaluating it may be a matter of weeks or months and is more systematic and sharply focused on particular issues, often with the help of videos or a diary in which the teachers recall and collect information on a particular issue. Validity and reliability of the information is important.
- V. *Re-theorise and reformulate*, which takes place over months or years and is more abstract and rigorous, and also considers various theories. In the process, the teachers' own theories will become changed, and it is possible that accepted theories are challenged. This level cannot occur unless the teacher is reading theory critically (Zeichner and Liston 1996:44–47; Griffiths and Tann 1992:78–79).

Zeichner and Liston (1996:47) argue that 'teachers need to reflect within all of these dimensions at one time or another and that too much of a focus on particular dimensions to the neglect of the others will lead to superficial reflection in which teachers' practical theories and practices are not questioned'. Because the focus of Griffiths and Tann's dimensions is on the time in which the reflection is done, there are not many similarities with van Manen's levels. However, *rapid reaction*, *repair* and *review* could be classified into the *technical* level proposed by van Manen (1977) as they require the identification of issues and situations with any kind of evaluation of the practice. Only in *review* do the teachers need to make a decision,

which means at least some kind of analysis of the situation. In that case, it may coincide with the *practical* level of van Manen that concerns the consequences on students' learning. Griffiths and Tann (1992) do not include the ethical and moral dimension proposed by van Manen (1977).

Following the structure of levels based on how to reflect (which are different from Griffiths and Tann's *temporal* dimensions), Hatton and Smith (1995) identify four levels of reflectivity in teacher candidates, particularly in journal writing. The first level is the *Descriptive writing or Non-Reflection* that does not offer reflection at all, but simply the description of an event or issue to be analysed. The second level, *Descriptive Reflection*, provides reasons for the situation, based on personal judgement, experience, and/or interpretation of the teacher candidates of classroom input or readings. Then, we can identify the *Dialogic reflection* that explores and considers different reasons and perspectives. Finally comes the *Critical reflection* level, which includes, apart from the different reasons, a broader consideration of the historical, social, and political context of the situation of analysis. A similar description was developed by Jay and Johnson (2002), who propose a typology in which they state three dimensions of reflection and provide a list of typical questions that might be asked to guide the students (Table 2):

Dimension	Definition	Typical questions
<i>Descriptive reflection</i>	Involves the process of defining the problem, and goes beyond a simple description of it; it means to recognise an important matter to be analysed, distinguish its features, emphasise and study causes and consequences, and re-contextualise and think about a change.	'What is happening? Is this working, and for whom? For whom is it not working? How do I know? How am I feeling? What am I pleased and/or concerned about? What do I not understand? Does this relate to any of my stated goals, and to what extent are they being met?' (Jay and Johnson 2002:77).
<i>Comparative</i>	Implies a new insight from different perspectives and points of view from other teachers, students,	'What are alternative views of what is happening? How do other people who are directly or indirectly involved describe and explain what's happening? What does the research contribute to an understanding of this matter? How can I improve what's not working?

<i>reflection</i>	parents, and authorities, amongst others.	If there is a goal, what are some other ways of accomplishing it? How do other people accomplish this goal? For each perspective and alternative, who is served and who is not?' (Jay and Johnson 2002:77).
<i>Critical reflection</i>	Involves making a judgement in order to find the best solution, exploring 'the best way of understanding, changing or doing' something (Jay and Johnson 2002:79). Ethic, moral and political aspects are considered.	'What are the implications of the matter when viewed from alternative perspectives? Given these various alternatives, their implications, and my own morals and ethics, which is best for this particular matter? What is the deeper meaning of what is happening, in terms of public democratic purposes of schooling? What does this matter reveal about the moral and political dimension of schooling? How does this reflective process inform and renew my perspective?' (Jay and Johnson 2002:77).

Table 2: Typology of reflection (Jay and Johnson 2002).

Hatton and Smith's (1995) levels, and Jay and Johnson's dimensions, are quite different to van Manen's categorisations of levels of reflection. Hatton and Smith's first and second levels are more in agreement with Jay and Johnson's first dimension that refers to identifying and distinguishing features, causes, and consequences in a very descriptive approach, whereas van Manen's technical (first) level focuses on the effectiveness of skills and knowledge. Even though Jay and Johnson (2002:77) consider the questions, *Is this working? For whom? And for whom is it not working?*, which might imply consequences mentioned by van Manen, that would be the only overlapping aspect in this first level.

The second level suggested by Jay and Johnson is similar to the *dialogic* (third) level by Hatton and Smith. Both levels are completely different to van Manen's, because Hatton and Smith (1995) and Jay and Johnson (2002) consider a comparison that implies various perspectives, such as people or theories, which are not considered by van Manen. Nevertheless, this insight from different points of view is related to *retheorise*, the fifth dimension outlined by Griffiths and Tann' (1992) and the third level suggested by Ward and McCotter in 2004 (below).

Ward and McCotter (2004) propose a rubric, using four levels, to enhance critical reflection, with the purpose of clarifying the dimensions and qualities of reflection and evaluating teachers' reflection. Their decision to create this rubric was made after considering different frameworks and affirming that most of them are linear, lack a method to evaluate the reflection of teachers according to their context, and are designed to describe a process but not to identify qualities of reflection related to practice, even though they can make visible some aspects of reflection. The rubric was designed to focus on three related questions about pre-service teachers' reflection: (i) the quality that distinguishes meaningful reflection; (ii) the relation of those qualities to a focus on student learning; and (iii) a description of the qualities 'in such a way as to make them visible and valued outcomes in their own right' (Ward and McCotter 2004:245). The rubric (used later by Watts and Lawson (2009) to carry out a study in order to make critical reflection explicit) is divided into four levels. For each level, teachers have to *focus* on something specific about practice, have a process of *enquiry*, and consider how that enquiry *changes* their practice and perspective (Table 3):

- ❖ The first level, *Routine*, does not demand a personal stance; on the contrary, it is concerned mainly with control of students, time management, workload, etc.
- ❖ The *Technical* level implies an instrumental response to specific situations without considering any change or evaluation of students' learning.
- ❖ The *Dialogic* level consists of analysing new insights from peers or students to interpret how they are learning, with the purpose of helping them, especially with students who have problems; it involves cycles of situated questions and action.

- ❖ The last level, *Transformative*, seeks change and there is a 'personal involvement with pedagogical, ethical, moral, cultural, or historical concerns and how these impact students and others' (Ward and McCotter 2004:250).

Level	Focus (What is the focus of concern about practice)	Inquiry (What is the process of inquiry)	Change (How does inquiry change practice and perspective)
Routine	Focus is on self-centred concerns (how does this affect me?) or on issues that do not involve a personal stake. Primary concerns may include control of students, time and workload, gaining recognition for personal success (including grades), avoiding blame for failure.	Questions about needed personal change are not asked or implied; often not acknowledging problems or blaming problems on others or limited time and resources. Critical questions and analysis are limited to critique of others. Analysis tends to be definitive and generalised.	Analysis of practice without personal response – as if analysis is done for its own sake or as if there is a distance between self and the situation
Technical	Focus is on specific teaching tasks such as planning and management, but does not consider connections between teaching issues. Uses assessment and observations to mark success or failure without evaluating specific qualities of student learning for formative purposes.	Questions are asked by oneself about specific situations or are implied by frustration, unexpected results, exciting results, or analysis that indicates the issue is complex. Stops asking questions after initial problem is addressed	Personally responds to a situation, but does not use the situation to change perspective.
Dialogic	Focus is on students. Uses assessment and interactions with students to interpret how or in what ways students are learning in order to help them. Especially concerned with struggling students	Situated questions lead to new questions. Questions are asked with others, with open consideration of new ideas. Seeks the perspectives of students, peers, and others.	Synthesises situated inquiry to develop new insights about teaching or learners or about personal teaching strengths and weaknesses leading to improvement of practice.
Transformative	Focus is on personal involvement with fundamental pedagogical, ethical, moral, cultural, or historical concerns and how these impact students and others.	Long-term ongoing inquiry including engagement with model mentors, critical friends, critical texts, students, careful examination of critical incidents, and student learning. Asks hard questions that challenge personally held assumptions.	A transformative reframing of perspective leading to fundamental change of practice.

Table 3: Ward and McCotter's Reflection Rubric (2004:250)

Ward and McCotter (2004) present a complete perspective of the process of reflection. With this rubric, it would be less problematic to evaluate teachers and

student teachers' process of reflection. Since the rubric seeks to evaluate the quality of reflection, it situates teachers' thinking within the context in which they work, and sees reflection as a cycle (framing and reframing questions). The purpose of this proposal is to use the rubric as a formative tool: 'the dimensions of Focus, Inquiry, and Change can be used as formative guides to help pre-service teachers evaluate, understand, and improve their own reflection' (Ward and McCotter 2004:255). However, one thing worth drawing attention to is that Ward and McCotter focus only on the teachers in the first two levels. To the best of my knowledge, based on the literature review and my own experience, reflection can be focused on teachers *and* students from the lowest levels of reflection. This reflection on teachers and students can be noticed from the beginning in the levels described by van Manen (1977) and Jay and Johnson (2002), among others. Larrivee (2008), for instance, declares that teachers' considerations can be related to their own performance or to students' behaviour and are taken into account from the first level. Larrivee (2008:342–343) suggests four levels of reflection as follows:

- I. *Pre-reflection*: denotes a reaction of the teachers to a situation.
- II. *Surface reflection*: implies a focus on strategies and methods, thinking on what works more than in the goal achievement; this second level involves a technical and descriptive reflection without considering values, beliefs, and assumptions.
- III. *Pedagogical reflection*: teachers make a connection between theory and practice; that is, 'teachers reflect on educational goals, the theories underlying approaches, and the connections between theoretical principles and practice' (Larrivee 2008:343).
- IV. *Critical reflection*: includes ethical, moral, social, and political realities, and teachers are more aware of consequences of what they do in class.

Larrivee does not include the consideration of other insights or perspectives when reflecting, such as colleagues and students' perspectives, which might require cooperative reflection. However, similar to Griffiths and Tann (1992), she includes a level in which the teachers connect practice and the theory that supports their actions.

Regardless of the different nomenclatures used by researchers, the process of reflection requires teachers and student teachers to move from a low to a high level. This scaffolding approach promotes critical reflection as the supreme level of reflection: 'it is important for teachers to progress through the levels of RP to ultimately become critically reflective teachers who pose the important questions of practice' (Larrivee 2008:344). Is it easy to achieve higher levels of reflection? Griffiths and Tann (1992) affirm that there is no doubt that individuals will find some levels easier than others. Moreover, calling one's own everyday behaviour into question can be a 'painful business': 'It is much easier to focus on the more external features of classrooms and schools' (Griffiths and Tann, 1992:79). Watts and Lawson (2009:610, citing Moon 2005) state that 'learners move through a continuum of thinking stages and this progress needs to be supported and developed through the careful provision of feedback and explanation'; otherwise, the highest level of reflection might be hard to achieve, as proven in various studies that conclude a critical reflective level needs to be emphasised, or that it might take the novice teacher and pre-service teacher a longer time to achieve it (e.g. Ward and McCotter 2004; Watts and Lawson 2009; Kwan and Simpson 2010; Larrivee 2008).

For the purpose of this study, I would like to have an 'eclectic' categorisation of levels. Mellow (2002) states that '[e]clecticism involves the use of a variety of [...] activities, each of which may have very different characteristics and may be

motivated by different underlying assumptions' (see also Larsen-Freeman 2000; Mellow 2000). My classification considers some aspects of the various researchers' suggestions because, in my opinion, one researcher lacks what another embraces, and so on. It is necessary, according to my limited experience with student teachers' reflective journals in my university, to take into account a very descriptive, non-reflective level, as Hatton and Smith (1995) note. Furthermore, the last level needs to heed ethical, moral, and political considerations, as most of the literature review reveals. My proposal (Table 4) of levels of reflection is based mainly on Ward and McCotter's (2004:250) Reflection form, while considering other researchers' proposals and typical questions, such as those of Jay and Johnson (2002:77). Also, reflection is focus on teachers and students from the first level (not considered by Ward and McCotter):

	Focus (What is the focus of concern about practice)	Enquiry (What is the process of inquiry)	Change (How does inquiry change practice and perspective)
Level			
Non-reflective (Hatton and Smith 1995)	Focus is on identifying and describing a sequence of class, time, activities, students, environment, and teacher's activities that do not involve personal stakes.	There is no enquiry at all. No need to question personal decisions or students' behaviour or reactions to activities. Analysis of the class, teacher, and students are generalised.	Analysis of practice without personal response—as if analysis is done for its own sake or as if there is a distance between self and the situation (Ward and McCotter, 2004).
Guiding questions: Who are the students? What is the classroom like? What activities were developed? How long does the activity take?			
Descriptive / Technical (Jay and Johnson 2002; Hatton and Smith 1995)	Focus is on self-centred concerns (how does this affect me?) or on issues that do not involve a personal stake. Primary concerns may include control of students, time, and workload, gaining recognition for personal success (including grades) (Ward and McCotter's Routine level, 2004).	It is still descriptive but starts focusing on specific teaching tasks, such as planning and management, and starts making connections between teaching issues at a descriptive level. Recognises an important matter to be analysed, distinguishes its features, emphasises and studies causes and consequences (Jay and Johnson 2002:77).	Provides reasons for the situations based on personal judgments, experiences, or interpretations of class, but does not express the use of the situation and what was learned from it to change perspective (Ward and McCotter 2004:250).

1995) (Ward and McCotter 2004; van Manen 1977)	Focuses on strategies and methods (Larrivee 2008). The focus on students is only at a descriptive level (e.g. age, characteristics, English level).	Analyses what works without values, beliefs and assumption (Larrivee 2008:342) Questions are asked by oneself about specific situations or are implied by frustration, unexpected results, exciting results, or analysis that indicates the issue is complex. Stops asking questions after initial problem is addressed. (Ward and McCotter 2004:250)	
Guiding questions: 'What is happening? Is this working, and for whom? For whom is it not working? How do I know? How am I feeling? What am I pleased and/or concerned about? What do I not understand? Does this relate to any of my stated goals, and to what extent are they being met?' (Jay and Johnson 2002:77)			
Comparative (Jay and Johnson 2002)	Focus is on students, strategies used, methods, approaches, and teacher. Uses assessment and interactions with students to interpret how or in what ways students are learning in order to help them. Especially concerned with struggling students.	Situated questions lead to new questions. Seeks for new insights from different perspectives and points of view from other peers, students, parents, and authorities, amongst others (Jay and Johnson 2002; Ward and McCotter 2004; Hatton and Smith 1995; Lee 2008). The Theory-Practice relation is evident (Larrivee 2008, Griffiths and Tann 1992).	Synthesises situated inquiry to develop new insights about teaching or learners or about personal teaching strengths and weaknesses leading to improvement of practice (Ward and McCotter 2004:250). Finds solutions, understands, changes, and does things differently (Jay and Johnson 2002:77). The attention to consequences in learning is based on theory and empirical research (Larrivee 2008, Griffiths and Tann 1992).
Guiding questions: What are the alternative views of what is happening? How do other people who are directly or indirectly involved describe and explain what's happening? How does the research contribute to an understanding of this matter? How can I improve what's not working? If there is a goal, what are some other ways of accomplishing it? How do other people accomplish this goal? For each perspective and alternative, who is served and who is not? (Jay and Johnson 2002:77)			
Critical / Transformative (van Manen 1977; Hatton and Smith 1995; Jay and Johnson 2002; Larrivee 2008) (Ward and McCotter 2004)	Analysis of teaching context (Hatton and Smith, 1995) focusing on personal involvement with fundamental, pedagogical, ethical, moral, cultural, or historical concerns and how these impact students, teaching, and others (Ward and McCotter 2004:250).	Long-term ongoing inquiry including engagement with model mentors, critical friends, critical texts, students, careful examination of critical incidents, and student learning. Asks hard questions that challenge personally held assumptions (Ward and McCotter 2004:250).	A transformative reframing of perspective leading to fundamental change of practice (Ward and McCotter 2004:250). There is a change of assumptions, beliefs, and teaching objectives and practice from ethical, moral, cultural, social, political perspective.
Guiding questions: What are the implications of the matter when viewed from these [ethical, moral, political] perspectives? Given these various alternatives, their implications, and my own moral and ethics, which is best for this particular matter? What is the deeper meaning of what is happening, in terms of public democratic purposes of schooling? What does this matter reveal about the moral and political dimension of schooling? How does this reflective process inform and renew my perspective. (Jay and Johnson 2002:77)			

Table 4: My guide: levels of reflection and guiding questions

The purpose of this rubric is to use it as an awareness-raising tool in order to provide a guide to facilitate student teachers' designation of the level they have, and as a guide to help PSTs in the process of scaffolding (Jay and Johnson 2002), and to help them decide on the following step or the focus of their reflection in order to become critically reflective practitioners. It is not my purpose to force PSTs to achieve the highest level during the intervention, but if we consider that 'reflective practice occurs when teachers consciously take on the role of reflective practitioner' (Farrell 2008:1), then it is my intention to make them notice the potential benefits of becoming critical reflective practitioners. As Wilson (2005:363) states, 'it is only through such explicit reflection that beginning teachers will be able to develop the capacity to be responsive practitioners beyond initial teacher education and into professional training'.

The levels of reflection is one of the many aspects I am considering for this study in order to foster reflection with PSTs. Another variable I believe to be important is the use of tools and strategies to engage, support, and enhance reflection. I focus on these in the following section.

3.2.7 Tools and strategies for fostering reflection

In Richards' (1995:60) words, 'many different approaches can be employed if one wishes to become a critically reflective teacher, including observations of oneself and others, team teaching, and exploring one's view of teaching through writing'. In the same vein, Xu (2009), Orlova (2009), Maarof (2007), Ward and McCotter (2004), and Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (2001), among others, mention that reflection can be done through different instruments and methods, such as journals, checklists, rubrics, portfolios, recordings, peer observations, and self-observation. Additionally, there is an emerging literature on means which can facilitate reflection

through, for example, the use of stimulated recall through videotaping and autobiography (Day 1985; Griffiths and Tann 1991), the use of metaphor (Mann 2008; Munby and Russell 1989, 1990; Tobin 1990), image (Clandinin 1989), photography (Griffiths and Tann 1991:73), and other techniques such as poetry, drawing, sculpting, narrative, role play simulations and drama (Moon 1999). According to Day (1993:84–85), all of this work is essentially concerned with the deconstruction and reconstruction of meaning; and its components recognise either implicitly or explicitly the existence of a 'reflective spectrum' through which theories may be examined and made public.

There are certainly a number of different tools and approaches that are being used to support reflective teaching practice, one of which is journal writing (Lee 2008; Moon 1999) that I used in my study. Richards and Farrell (2005) acknowledge that writing a journal helps teachers question and analyse consciously their practice. Farrell (2008:3) suggests that:

Writing regularly in a teaching journal can help teachers clarify their own thinking, explore their own beliefs and practices, become more aware of their teaching styles, and be better able to monitor their own practices.

Furthermore, Lee (2008) states that journals facilitate PSTs' meaning-making along the process of learning to be teachers and serve as a means of enquiry about teaching and learning: journal writing increases PSTs' awareness 'about the way a teacher teaches and the way a student learns' (Burton and Carroll 2001, cited in Lee 2008:26). Lee (2004:74) also states that writing journals can stimulate PSTs' thinking that enables them to make connections between issues, generate new ideas, construct knowledge, and personalise their learning process. Journal writing is also seen as a tool that offers a place for the articulation and exploration of beliefs and practices, and as a means for providing a way for teachers to work

through the emotional part of the teaching: 'we can even accept a journal as a place to vent our frustration and to work through our judgments' (Gebhard and Oprandy 1999:24). What is more, Yost et al. (2000) indicate that, as teacher candidates engage in journal writing, they will be able to develop a habit of reflection. To cite more examples, Moon (1999:188–193) suggests a list of purposes for writing journals that go from a technical level (keeping records) to a higher level that helps promote reflection. Some of them are:

- ❖ To record experience
- ❖ To deepen the quality of learning, in the form of critical thinking or developing a questioning attitude
- ❖ To enable the learner to understand their own learning process
- ❖ To facilitate learning from experience
- ❖ To increase active involvement in learning and personal ownership of learning
- ❖ To increase the ability to reflect and improve the quality of learning
- ❖ To enhance problem-solving skills
- ❖ To enhance professional practice or the professional self in practice
- ❖ To enhance the personal valuing of the self towards self-empowerment
- ❖ To foster reflective and creative interaction in a group.

Interestingly, Moon (1999) mentions in the last point what other authors (e.g. Bolton 2010; Brookfield 1995; Richards 1995) also acknowledge: the usefulness of journals in terms of the interaction that can be achieved with peers and mentors. Lee (2008), for instance, classifies four different kinds of journals that foster the interaction and collaboration between the student teacher and the teacher, and student teacher and other student teacher(s):

- ❖ *Dialogue journals* involve teachers and students 'writing and exchanging their writing in mutual response' (Lee 2008:118)
- ❖ *Collaborative/Interactive group journals* (Richards 1995) involve student teachers in writing and exchanging their journals to support as peers
- ❖ *Response journals* require student teachers to record their reflection on and personal reactions to what they read, observe, listen, and think
- ❖ *Teaching journals* refer to reflections based on teaching experiences.

The latter types of journals are also exchangeable with the teacher and/or other student teachers and also promote cooperative development. As Bolton (2010:140) states, 'journals often inform dialogic work with supervisor, tutor, or mentor [...] and give a sense of respect and being valued'. It is suggested (e.g. Bolton 2010; Williams 2001; Hancock 1999; Wong et al. 1995; Mezirow 1990) that dialogue through journals is one strategy for stimulating critical reflection, by giving the opportunity to the educator to question 'origins of the [practitioner] self perceptions and the consequences of holding them' (Williams 2001:31). However, as Williams states, we must be aware that the time required for the reflective practitioner to write and for the educator to respond is often seen as a barrier to use dialogue journals. According to Moon (1999), journals can be presented in either a structured or unstructured form. The unstructured forms she identifies are: *Free writing and reflecting* (usually chronological, not necessarily in a daily-basis), *Recording relating to an ongoing event or issue* (for record-keeping), and *Double-entry journal* (with two columns, one for the description of actual facts and the other one for the thoughts that result of the experience). The classification of structured forms proposed by Moon (1999:194–201) is as follows:

1. Autobiographical writing: it may not be chronological and may be related in some way to the current time, such as relating a previous experience that is similar to one in the present.
2. Structure in form of exercise: for instance, writing from different angles, using metaphors, writing unsent letters, reflecting on a book or reading assignment, responding to questions, describing the process of solving problems, lists, dialogues with imaginary people, working with dreams and imagery, etc.
3. Structure in the form of questions to answer or guidance about an issue to be covered.

As can be observed, there are different activities that can be done with a journal that serve to guide student teachers' reflection. Writing a journal is a personal and essentially private interest, 'yet parts can fruitfully be shared with confidential trusted others' (Bolton 2010:125). In that way, collaborative reflection is promoted and brings many benefits to the teacher candidates' process of reflection (see section 3.2.8).

Richards (1995) proposes other approaches to critical reflection: Self-observation and Peer observation. These observations can provide opportunities to reflect and be conscious of the actions done in class, as well as to learn from others' teaching because student teachers are exposed to different teaching styles; they also enable student teachers to compare what they do in specific situations and what the person being observed does during similar events (Richards 1995). Self-observations and peer observations 'provide opportunities for critical reflection on their own teaching' even when observing others (Richards 1995:60). During the observations, mainly *in situ*, student teachers may use different tools to keep a record of what is observed from themselves and others: inventories or check lists (Richards 1995), ethnographic notes (Lengeling 2013; Day 1990), and reflective

journals. In the case of the current study, the PSTs observed their peers and in-service teachers as part of the *Teaching practice* subjects.

Apart from the tools mentioned, it is recommended to video record student teachers' classes in order for them to engage in post-conference reflection with the teacher or with other student teachers (Fadde et al. 2009). When teaching a class, there can be many variables or things happening simultaneously that the teachers or PSTs cannot capture at the moment and which cannot be recalled later for analysis, thus video recordings can supply student teachers with more detailed and trustworthy information that is grounded in the actual records rather than uncertain recollections for the analysis and evaluation of their teaching performance, from an observer perspective (Kong et al. 2009). As acknowledged by researchers (e.g. Rhine and Bryant 2007; Samuels and Betts 2007; Lee and Wu 2006), a video recording also provides evidence of the actions and time to revisit, think further, and expand initial views. Studies by researchers such as Robinson and Kelley (2007) and Freese (1999) also show that student teachers display significant growth in the levels of reflective thoughts after browsing video recordings of lessons in teaching practice. 'The use of videos is thus considered to be helpful in enhancing the depth and quality of self reflection by student teachers' (Kong et al. 2009:546). Kong et al. (2009:547) also state that, through the use of video, student teachers can 'construct applicable knowledge about classroom instruction, develop reflective practices on their teaching work, and take responsibility for their own learning'. Observing, analysing, and discussing classroom performance is enhanced and facilitated by the use of videotaping (Orlova 2009; Chinnery 2006; Whitehead and Fitzgerald 2006) because it allows trainees to 'notice and respond to both strong and weak aspects of their teaching [...] re-examine it many times [...] and it has a well-known motivating effect' (Orlova 2009:31). In her study, Orlova

attested that students typically show an increased self-awareness and a sense of continuity regarding reflection for professional development.

Chen et al. (2009:283) state that, since reflection is a mental process, some strategies such as questioning can make reflection 'become more effective and produce better results'. King (1994) classifies prompt questions into memorization, comprehension, and integration questions, the last two types being high level questions. According to Chen et al. (2009), 'providing high level prompts [questions] is a key factor for promoting reflection [...] [and] are more helpful for constructing new knowledge' (pg. 284). Likewise, Williams (2001:31) indicates that critical questioning promotes critical reflections through discussion and dialogue about experience, prompts 'explicit assumptions and encourage[s] learners to question the validity of the premises underlying the assumptions'. Moreover, when including critical incidents as a means to trigger reflection, a set of guiding questions is generally provided to analyse the critical incident; analysis 'is perhaps even more important than the incident itself' (William 2001:31) because it provides valuable means in understanding essential assumptions and beliefs (Kim 1999; Smith 1998; Minghella and Benson 1995; Kottkamp 1990).

The final part of this section deals with the affordances that new developments in technology make possible. Wach (2015:40) argues that 'technology may promote reflective thinking in pre- and in-service teachers by creating opportunities for a conscious articulation of their practice, a reconstruction of knowledge, and enhanced awareness of learning and teaching processes'. According to her (2015: 40, citing Chapman et al. 2005), reflective practitioners 'have time to reflect before they respond, as well as opportunities for deeper thinking and challenging assumptions, and for formative feedback and peer mentoring'. Although there are many web-based tools (e.g. e-portfolios, blogs, academic platforms, chatrooms)

helping with reflection nowadays, in this section I would like to centre attention on online social networking sites. According to Hart and Steinbrecher (2011) and Carter et al. (2008), online social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace) are being considered mechanisms for communication and support in order to enhance instruction. Hart and Steinbrecher (2011:320) state that 'as members of the Net Generation increasingly enter the teaching profession, more and more teachers are becoming active users of social networking sites [...] joining virtual discussion groups based on interest in a topic, cause, hobby, or organization'. Whipp (2003) notes that online discussion can enhance RP if the dialogue is 'carefully structured to support high levels of reflection' (Whipp 2003:331). According to MacKnight (2000), web-based interaction can be an effective tool when it is performed with specific goals, structured tasks, and thoughtful questions that guide and encourage fruitful discussion. Rhine and Bryant (2007) conducted a study which demonstrates that web-based discourse (as well as digital video) between student teachers and teacher educators can link practice and theory while training pre-service teachers. According to Rhine and Bryant (2007:347, citing Moffett 2002), teacher educators have recently explored the value of online discussion in helping pre-service teachers process field experiences. Findings in a study carried out by Hart and Steinbrecher (2011) related to the use of Facebook suggest that pre-service teachers engage in interactions of a professional nature, on three major purposes:

1. Collaborating and generating ideas for instruction.
2. Connecting, updating, and supporting one another.
3. Seeking professional advice.

It appears, in Hart and Steinbrecher's (2011) experience, that pre-service teachers interact on and use Facebook for a variety of professionally-oriented aims, such as: making requests for strategies in teaching, sharing experiences, or supporting one

another as they undertake the teaching venture. Nevertheless, as Hart and Steinbrecher (2011) caution, 'more research is needed on interaction in online environments and on best practices for encouraging productive online learning'.

3.2.8 Impact of collaborative reflection

It has been widely discussed that collaboration allows the development of teachers' skills and professional growth (e.g. Kuusisaari 2014; Meirink et al. 2007; Grossman et al. 2001; Putnam and Borco 2000; Day 1999). As stated by Kuusisaari (2014:46), collaboration and 'social support also help teachers to learn from each other, develop distributed expertise and gives teachers access to a far wider range of ideas'; moreover, 'participants build upon each other's ideas to jointly construct a new meaning' (Kuusisaari 2014:49). Schneider and Watkins (1996:157) state that social interaction is essential for learning and development, 'not only as a source of stimulation and feedback, but as the very means by which individuals psychological functioning [such as problem solving] comes to be.' This is in agreement with Vygotsky's (1978, 1987a) sociocultural theory (SCT) and his concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). He argues that 'learning is a social process, in which a learner can go beyond her or his present capabilities by using mediation mechanisms' (Kuusisaari 2014:48), mainly that of language. According to Vygotsky (1978:86), the ZPD 'is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving [...] in collaboration with more capable peers.' Although most research on Vygotsky's SCT and ZPD often apply to the investigation of facilitated and scaffolded collaboration between teacher and students in a classroom setting, in my view it is possible to use Vygotsky's concepts as a way of considering the role of teacher training tutors. In other words, SCT provides a way of looking at RP as a supported process in novice teachers'

development. In the current study SCT is seen as the theoretical basis for the promotion of collaborative and dialogic reflection in a Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) programme, in which the collaboration is peer-to-peer (PSTs), with the presence of the researcher as a figure that provides guidance and is also involved in group reflections by prompting and questioning. Similar to a research conducted by Kuusisaari, in this study 'the crucial foci of Vygotsky's ZPD theory are: (1) collaboration between capable peers, (2) fruitful interconnection [dialogue] of [...] everyday experience, [...]' (Kuusisaari 2014:48). According to Walsh (2013:6, citing van Lier 1996), '[i]n a teacher education/development context, and from a sociocultural perspective, teachers [or PSTs in the case of the current study] are 'scaffolded' through their 'zones of proximal development' (ZPD) to a higher plane of understanding through the dialogues they have with other[s] [...]'. In this sense, conversations or 'scaffolded dialogues' are central to reflective practice since they allow the participants to clarify issues and to achieve new 'levels of understanding' (Walsh 2013:6).

Reflective practitioners and researchers have acknowledged the importance of collaboration and dialogue in the development and the process of reflection of teachers. For instance, Stenhouse (1975:156) introduces the term *critical friend*, Hatton and Smith (1995) suggest *dialogic reflection*, Edge (2002a) presents *cooperative reflection*, Zwozdiak-Myers (2012:14, 24–27) talks about Ghaye and Ghaye's (1998) *reflective conversations*, and Mann and Talandis (2012) promote community practice. Calderhead and Gates (1993) express the view that discussions of reflective teaching frequently dwell upon the teachers' individual capacity to analyse and evaluate practice and the context in which it occurs. They note that there is some evidence that advocates that reflection requires a supportive environment in which it can be encouraged (e.g. Zeichner and Liston

1987; Jay and Johnson 2002). 'It may only be within a culture of collaboration that beginning teachers are encouraged to develop as reflective practitioners' (Calderhead and Gates 1993:5). Additionally, as Stenhouse (1975:156) states, classroom research is about bettering classroom experiences, while teachers need to communicate and report what they do with other colleagues. When we speak with others, we have the opportunity to express our ideas, exchange information, respond to, and understand our practice. Lieberman and Miller (1984) assert that without authentic dialogue novice teachers might not feel that they are in a supporting environment. As Rogers and Babinski (2002:45) state, 'it is almost impossible for them to develop and grow'. Furthermore, Walsh (2013:122) states that '[t]hrough talk, new realisations and greater insight come about' and that '[i]t is this kind of 'light bulb moment' which professional dialogue can create'.

When Edge (2002a:25–30) talks about his proposal of engaging in cooperative development, he explains it as a method for teachers to work together with equals in order to develop as persons who teach on their own terms for a determined period of time, according to rules established and understood by both sides with respect, empathy, and sincerity. Working with others who understand what they mean when talking about teaching could provide good opportunities to create a dialogue and receive feedback, get ideas for improvement, and learn by sharing with others. With regard to the latter, Edge (2002a:21) says there are three ways of learning: through our intellect, our experience, and through articulation. 'We learn by speaking, by working to put our own thoughts together so that someone else can understand them' (Edge 2002a:19). To support this process of articulating our thoughts, Edge cites Taylor (1985:36) as follows:

Articulations are not simple descriptions. On the contrary, articulations are attempts to formulate what is initially inchoate, or confused, or badly formulated. But this kind of formulation, or

reformulation does not leave its object unchanged. To give a certain articulation is to shape our sense of what we desire or what we hold important in a certain way.

(Edge 2002a:20)

As Greene (1986:73) says, 'it is difficult to imagine students discovering what they think and what they do not yet know if there is no space of conversation, no space of engagement in diversity'. Other benefits of cooperative development that Edge (2002a) highlights are that teachers increase:

- ❖ Awareness of their own strengths and skills
- ❖ Appreciation of the strengths and skills of others
- ❖ Willingness to listen carefully to others [I add: and to be listened]
- ❖ Ability to interact positively with changes in their teaching environment
- ❖ Capacity to identify directions for their own continuing development
- ❖ Potential to facilitate the self-development of others.

(Edge 2002a:13)

Underhill (1992), as with Edge, recognises that benefits of working in groups can be favourable for everyone involved. He states that working collaboratively provides one with the opportunity to increase self-awareness of performance, of potential, and of development:

The whole process of asking high-yield questions in relation to my performance and my potential is fraught with an equal high risk of destabilizing my view of myself through bringing my unaware beliefs, attitudes and behaviours into awareness.

(Underhill 1992:76)

This is in accordance with Vygotsky's (1987b:56–57) principle of internalisations which states that '[a]n operation that initially represents an external activity is reconstructed and begins to occur internally'. Walsh (2013:7) states that 'teachers first gain new knowledge, new ideas or new understandings through interactions with colleagues [...]. This 'publicly derived' new knowledge is then privately internalised as the same teachers take ownership and apply new practices to their own context.' The process, Wash says, 'is both dialectic and dialogic: it entails

dialogue with other[s] [...] which then becomes a personal or individual practice.’ Additionally, according to Underhill, through interaction with peers we can create a supporting climate that helps participants feel safe enough and be more sincere with themselves and others. In this way, ‘teachers have less need to pretend or play games in their responses’ (Underhill 1992:77). Knill and Samuels (2011, citing Brookfield 1995) state that, without challenge and confrontation from others’ perspectives, reflection may not lead to new ways of thinking and acting. Both Underhill (1992) and Edge (2002a) emphasise the significance of reflecting in an honest and adequate environment; otherwise, the reflection would not be effective. An example of this kind of negative situation was reported by Day (1993:85, citing Handal 1990), who identified in Norway, as in England, ‘a “triple pressure” on schools and teachers to develop a more collective strategy of work through: the establishment of collective tasks; the provision of collective time to solve them; and the ideological pressure on teachers to work together’. Day (1993:85) reports that the dissatisfaction experienced was because participants were obliged to work together ‘often in “contrived” collegiality’. Zeichner and Liston (1996:74–76) state that the way in which RP has come to be used in many situations and by some institutions has done little to foster genuine teacher development. This situation reinforces the necessity of what Edge (2002a) proposes: agreement between the people to work together, respect, empathy, and sincerity. To this, Bassot (2013:46) adds that a critical friend (as the person you reflect on with) should be someone who you know and can trust, who asks questions and challenges your thinking, who is positive, constructive, and encouraging, and who is a good listener. The work done in cooperative development (Edge 2002a) values opening up a space for reflection which is supported by others (e.g. colleagues), for the purposes of allowing the individual to get further in their own reflection. Here the individual ‘speaker’ evaluates elements of their own practice (Edge 2002a). A critical friend is

different in emphasis and perhaps allows more scope for the evaluation to come from the peer (rather than the individual reflecting teacher).

3.2.9 Reflection for pre-service teachers

As I previously mentioned, some researchers have conducted studies to prove that reflection is both important and feasible, because practitioners receive benefits from it while helping their own students, improving their teaching abilities, and, at the same time, becoming more aware of their own performance (Underhill 1999). Reflecting on our teaching practice and the context of our work is an important aspect to consider in our continuing development as teachers. There is evidence (e.g. Fat'hi and Behzadpour 2011; Orlova 2009; Xu 2009; Larrivee 2008; Lee 2008; Maarof 2007; Ward and McCotter 2004) of the significance of initiating reflection when student teachers are being educated to be teachers. The early introduction of reflection helps student teachers to understand and improve their work, as well as to react, examine, and evaluate what they need to consider in their teaching practice. This will allow them to make decisions on necessary changes to improve methodology, assessment, attitudes, and beliefs at that initial stage of their profession. According to Moon (1999:73), 'Schön's book (1987) on educating the reflective practitioner implies that the skills of reflective practice are to be initiated within the context of initial training'.

As Rodman (2010) mentions, it is a major responsibility of teacher education to facilitate a reflective, self-monitoring practice and to promote such a practice as a critical and active habit that improves the pre-service teachers' pedagogical ability. Furthermore, the benefits of reflection are not just related to the improvement of teaching, but also to the improvement of the process of reflection. LaBoskey (1993:26) affirms that one of the aims of reflective teacher education programmes

should be to help PSTs 'become reflective teachers by teaching them what it means to be reflective and how one goes about reflecting'. Moon (1999) declares that the argument in favour of teaching students to reflect is reported as the basic introduction of the habit of reflecting on practice (Zeichner and Liston 1987), the development of the ability of students to be critical (Smyth 1989), and the improvement of their use of reflection in action (Hatton and Smith 1995). It is also suggested that, through an understanding of the process of reflection in PSTs (e.g. how they think about their practice, how reflection influences what they do or stop doing, and how their thinking is affected by alternative course designs and new theories), 'we may develop an improved understanding of the nature and potential of reflection' (Calderhead 1989:9). Some of the questions then might be: How to initiate and facilitate RP? How to make PSTs aware of the importance of reflecting and becoming critical? According to Jay and Johnson (2002:74), 'the complexity of reflection makes it difficult to teach'. Nevertheless, based on the literature included in this chapter, I think there are possible ways to introduce and practice it (in fact even Jay and Johnson propose a typology to engage in RP). My proposal is, first, to introduce PSTs to the world of reflection by explicitly telling them what reflection is and helping them to understand what it involves, its benefits and importance for their continuing development (which have been mentioned previously). Second, and more importantly, by fostering the ability to reflect on different aspects involved in their practice, encouraging them to use reflective tools and strategies in order to analyse, evaluate, and question their practice and context, and increase their awareness on these issues and on the responsibility they have to develop as teachers. As some researchers propose (e.g. Zeichner and Liston 1996; Edge 2002), it would be beneficial to invite teachers to talk to others, ideally in a supportive environment of collaboration, about their actions, beliefs, problems, and the puzzles they face during their practices. Furthermore, I propose a process of

support for the novice teachers in order to guide them through the use of different tools and strategies in order for them to engage in critical reflection.

This proposal might give the impression of following a 'good recipe' to become critically reflective, but as Jay and Johnson (2002) state, it is not an easy job despite the usefulness of RP. I have mentioned in a previous section the advantages of initiating RP in the early stages, but there are also some critics of this method. For example, Calderhead and Gates (1993:4–5) declare that the aims of pre-service reflective teaching programmes are quite often very ambitious and establish goals that are probably impossible to achieve in the time available. Additionally, becoming a critically reflective teacher (one who is aware of their own values and beliefs, able to analyse their own practice, etc.) involves significant ability, knowledge, and experience, things that student teachers do not necessarily have when initiating their practice and which are the real content of professional reflection (Moon 1999:73). Griffiths and Tann (1991:72) observe that, because of the lack of experience and knowledge when trying to engage them in RP, it was difficult for PSTs (and even for some in-service teachers) to relate theory to practice. In the same vein, Bolton (2010:5) reports that 'reflective practice needs confident experienced teaching and facilitating'. According to Bolton, the lack of familiarity with teaching practices may provoke student teachers' feelings of vulnerability and frustration (Gray 2007), to be resistant to reflect (Bulpitt and Martin 2005), or even 'angry, challenged, threatened, demoralized, shocked, and put off by the *leap into the unknown*' (Trelfa 2005:206); instead, they might merely write safely and hypothetically about themes rather than specific experiences (Clarke 1998).

The lack of knowledge, teaching skills, and experience are not the only considerations to bear in mind when fostering reflection with PSTs. The question is

about the impact of reflection on in-service or pre-service teachers' teaching practice. Does reflection help them improve their practice? Akbari (2007), for instance, notes that teachers engaging in RP does not necessarily mean that students will achieve better results and that there is no evidence to link reflective teaching to actual learning outcomes and improved teacher practice, which can be considered a potential problem to the approach. Nevertheless, the same author carried out a research in 2010 which provides evidence that teachers' reflection processes helped them improve as teachers and, consequently, could significantly predict students' achievement.

Another criticism of RP is related to the demands of schools to include and evaluate reflection. Hobbs (2007) reports negative attitudes towards reflection and the effects they have on students' grades. She recommends considering the activity of RP as an activity that does not affect students' grades, as they might reject reflection or just write what they think the teacher wants to see/read.

Considering the advantages and disadvantages in the process of reflection, I believe it is worth promoting it from the early stages, thus providing PSTs with opportunities to gain experience and knowledge with the support of a person guiding the process of acquiring the habit of reflecting. For this, as Mann and Walsh (2013) argue, there is a need for data-led evidence to foster reflection, as well as the need to acquire skills and practices that will allow awareness and understanding of our context through collaborative reflection. It is necessary to enhance reflection with the use of not only written, but also oral forms of reflection and a variety of tools and tasks that 'need to be introduced slowly' (Mann and Walsh 2013:299).

Chapter Four: Research methodology

As an educator in a programme that prepares future teachers, I have had the opportunity to analyse and evaluate my PSTs' written reflective journals. In my experience, those journals generally show descriptions of what they did and observed during the last year of their degree. Observing PSTs' low level of reflection caught my attention and interest for helping them and providing them with more reflective methods that could help accomplish better levels, as well as helping them to become aware of the benefits of reflecting. In my view, one appropriate way to help my students engage in RP and for me to facilitate the process is through Action Research (AR). This would allow me the opportunity to analyse and reflect on the problem observed (in this case, my students' low level of reflection and the use of a very limited range of reflection methods); to consequently plan an action for improvement of the practice; to intervene to execute the plan and observe the outcomes; and, finally, to reflect on those outcomes and define a new plan.

The first section of this chapter aims to present an account of what a qualitative design involves, as well as the definition and benefits, approaches, characteristics, and the cycles or stages that comprise AR. In the second section of the chapter, I take account of the research methods I used during the intervention. The third section presents the ethical issues (consent forms, confidentiality, privacy), as well as the piloting of instruments used. Finally, I provide as an account of data analysis (section four).

4.1 Qualitative inquiry

4.1.1 Definition

The present research did not aim to measure or use statistical analysis to explain a phenomenon, but to explore and interpret an issue (Creswell 2013) in which the voice of the participants became immersed in specific social contexts to be studied.

As Richards (2003:8) states:

Quantitative research, experiments and surveys, can explain many things and can provide us with valuable information and insights, but they are not designed to explore the complexities and conundrums of the immensely complicated social world that we inhabit. [...] where qualitative approach offers the best source of illumination.

According to Creswell (2013:48), we use qualitative research (hereafter QR) because ‘interactions among people, for example, are difficult to capture with existing measures [...] [that] may not be sensitive to issues’ such as gender, economic status, and any other differences. Creswell states that we also conduct QR because we need to explore a problem or issue and identify non-easy-to-measure variables; because we want to *empower* people being studied or involved in order to share their stories and to hear their voices; and because we need complex and detailed comprehension of the issue, people, and context of participants. According to Creswell (2013:48), this ‘can only be established by talking directly with people and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature’. As Richards (2003:9) states, QR is mainly a ‘person-centred enterprise’.

For a better understanding of what QR involves, I would like now to provide two definitions that include the many factors that should be taken into account when doing QR. The first one is provided by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), who have

considered the ever-changing nature of qualitative enquiry (Creswell 2013). Denzin and Lincoln conclude that:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

(Denzin and Lincoln 2011:3)

The second definition was proposed by Creswell (2013) who incorporates many of Denzin and Lincoln's elements, but offers more emphasis on the research design and the role of the researcher and the participants, as well as on social and human issues:

Qualitative research begins with assumption and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change.

(Creswell 2013:44)

The features of QR foregrounded by these researchers resonated with my research proposal due to my interest in analysing the phenomenon on an emerging qualitative approach to enquiry. This allowed me to start my research with an open mind in order to change and adjust it according to what participants and outcomes indicated during the study. In my study, the voices of the participants were listened to and my reflexivity as the researcher was included. I considered the results of some of the representations or data collection techniques suggested by Denzin and

Lincoln (2011), which were gathered in a natural setting (that is, my students' own teaching practice in their own context). Furthermore, I prioritised people and their relation to their context, as proposed by Creswell (2013).

4.1.2 Characteristics of qualitative research

According to the definitions provided above, QR today involves a more interpretive enquiry and situates the study 'within a political, social, and cultural context, and the reflexivity or "presence" of the researchers in the accounts they present' (Creswell 2013:45). Considering those elements, it would be worth describing some specific characteristics of QR that suited my study. These are summarized in the following paragraphs, without considering any level of importance or specific order.

Dörnyei (2007) points out that QR takes place in a *natural setting* and that there is no attempt to control any situation under study. Researchers gather information by talking directly to the subjects involved in the study and observing them behave and act within their context (Creswell 2013). That is, researchers have contact with, or are immersed in, the research setting in order to capture details about what is happening in the context (Dörnyei 2007). Concerning my study, in the exploratory phase I analysed the PSTs' experiences in their real context and situation by talking to them, observing them in their own environment, and by having direct access to their reflective journals and opinions, without controlling the process.

Creswell (2013) mentions the *researcher as key instrument* to highlight the direct relation the researcher has with data collection through the examination of documents, behaviour observed, and participants' interviews by the researchers themselves. In my view, my role as a researcher was essential. It was me (the researcher) who gathered the data in the natural setting in order to better

understand the specific situation and to make suitable decisions during the research. This allowed me to have a complete vision of the phenomenon and obtain better conclusions. However, I had to be aware of my role as a researcher in the sense that Dörnyei (2007) states. He (2007:38) indicates that 'the research outcome is ultimately the product of the researcher's subjective interpretations of the data.' As Haverkamp (2005) states, the researcher own values, personal history, and position become an integral part of the enquiry. Nevertheless, although I was aware of the "interference" my personal history and background as a teacher might have in the analysis, I interpreted the data by reflecting on my students' viewpoints and being objective in order to echo the participants' opinions and experiences, based on the evidence of the outcomes. This takes me to the next characteristic of QR: insider meaning.

An important view that I would like to include is the one Richards (2003:10) mentions in relation to the query 'to understand the meanings and significance of those actions from the perspective of those involve'. This is what Dörnyei (2007:38) refers to as the *insider meaning*, which 'is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings' of participants' views of the situation being investigated, not the sense that the researchers bring to the research or the literature (Creswell 2013:47). As Punch (2005) suggests, just the actual subjects of study can reveal the meanings of what they experience, think, and do. I personally think that this is the most relevant feature of QR, especially if we consider that it is the voice of the participants that needed to be revealed, according to their own experiences in their own context or reality.

The *emergent design* is another characteristic emphasised in QR by scholars (e.g. Creswell 2013; Dörnyei 2007). The importance here resides in the fact that, ideally, researchers start doing their research with a 'completely open mind and without

setting out to test preconceived hypothesis' (Dörnyei 2007:37). This keeps the design open to possibilities of change, or enables it to adjust in the light of details or evidence that emerge during the process of investigation, once the researcher enters the field and begins data collection.

In order to carry out this study, I took into account a *holistic account* of the outcomes, in which researchers try to show the picture of the issue under study by 'reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges' (Creswell 2013:47). As Dörnyei (2007) and Richards (2003) state, the nature of QR implies the use of a wide range of methods to collect data in order to establish different perspectives and make sense of meanings, as well as 'capture rich and complex details' (Dörnyei 2007:37). Creswell (2013) suggests that, rather than relying on only one data source, it is better to gather information through multiple forms such as interviews, observations, and documents. Other sources of data collection can be: field notes, journals, diary entries, photos, and videos (Dörnyei 2007). As Bryman (2012) suggests, we need to include more specific ways of interviews (qualitative interviews, focus groups) and observations (ethnographic). The current study considered some of these methods to support the data collection: a semi-structured questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, researcher's journal, field notes, students' journals, and recordings/transcriptions of group reflection sessions. Although it was intended to use video recordings to stimulate recall and use data-led reflection, it was impossible for the researcher to gain permission in public schools to fulfil this activity (as I explain in section 4.3.7 of this chapter).

The last, but not least, characteristic I would like to mention is related to the approach to analyse data. The various methods to collect data can be analysed through inductive and deductive logic. According to Creswell (2013), this *complex*

reasoning helps researchers analyse data from both perspectives: researchers build their patterns, categories and themes from the bottom up by inductively working back and forth between the themes and the database. They also use deductive thinking in which they build themes that are constantly being checked against the data collected. For the purpose of the current study, I used the inductive method to build categories, patterns and themes derived from the outcomes generated by the participants (see section 4.5.2 for details of the analysis process). As can be observed, there are various elements to consider in QR. As Creswell (2013:42) says, we should:

[...] think metaphorically of qualitative research as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material.

4.1.3 Validity in qualitative research

Despite the many benefits and advantages of QR, such as the impact it can have as a transformative potential for the researcher and the participants, the broad aim to understand some complex aspects of the lived world (Richards 2003:9), its exploratory nature as an effective way of exploring new and uncharted areas, and the richness of data and material for the report, 'quantitative researchers sometimes criticize the qualitative paradigm for not following the principles of the "scientific method" or for having small sample sizes' (Dörnyei 2007:55). In a spirited denial of the allegations that qualitative research is 'sloppy', Maxwell (1992:285–295) proposed five components that help ensure validity in qualitative research, as follow: *Descriptive validity* that concerns the factual accuracy of the researcher's account and considers both the researcher's experience and the information from data; *Interpretative validity* which focuses on the quality of the description of the participant's viewpoint that could be validated when the researcher asks participants to provide feedback on the researcher's report of findings; *Theoretical*

validity that concerns the fact that the researcher incorporates an appropriate level of theoretical support and how well this theory explains the phenomenon studied; *Generalizability*, divided into 'internal generalizability' and 'external generalizability', being 'Internal generalizability' to be able to generalise within the community or institution where the researcher conducted the study and made observations, whereas 'external generalizability' refers to doing the generalisation in other communities or institutions. Finally, *Evaluative validity* refers to how the researcher evaluates the phenomenon studied (for example, in terms of usefulness, practicability, desirability). I considered the five components suggested in order to guarantee the validity of the current study.

One of the goals of the study was to understand the process that the PSTs follow when reflecting, as well as their opinion (voice) about the use of reflective tools and strategies, how they used them, and the impact of RP on the PSTs. My intention in this study was not only to show an understanding and interpretation of the process, but also to observe the effects that an intervention had in PSTs' reflection. This leads me to the next section of this chapter, in which I explain my research choice of Action Research as the tradition that helped me achieve this aim.

4.2 Action research

4.2.1 Definition and benefits

Action research (AR) is part of 'a quiet methodological revolution' towards qualitative research approaches that appeared in reaction to experimental and quantitative approaches (Denzin and Lincoln 1998:vii in Burns 2005:57). It has been defined as 'simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations' with the purpose of improving the rationality and understanding their own practices within their specific context (Carr and Kemmis 1986:162). A

parallel can be drawn between the latter authors and Burns (2005), who states that AR is perceived as a means towards creating better comprehension of a problem in a social situation and improving the quality of people's interaction and practices within that context. According to Burns (2005), the central aspect of AR is the simultaneous focus on *action* and *research*. Action, in the view of Burns, requires an intervention in which participants are exposed to concrete strategies, processes or activities. This intervention 'occurs in response to a perceived problem, puzzle or question' (Burn 2005:58) that can emerge in myriad areas and contexts in applied linguistics and education, including school management or administration, curriculum implementation (Burns 2005), school improvement programme and policy development (Carr and Kemmis 1986), teaching methods, attitudes and values, continuing professional development of teachers (Cohen et al. 2011), classroom management, particular teaching areas (e.g. reading, oral skills), student behaviour, and motivation (Wallace 1998), among others. Cohen et al. (2011:344) point out that 'action research can be used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks and procedures cries out for solution, or where some change of feature results in a more desirable outcome'.

AR, as it is claimed, is the research method preferred when a social practice is the focus of the research (Carr and Kemmis 1986), where a key purpose 'is to understand better some aspects of professional practice as a means of bringing about improvement' (Richards 2003:24). To the best of my knowledge, this preference is because AR seeks not only to describe and understand a problem, but also to intervene in order to improve, involve participants, and interpret the results in the light of evidence provided by participants. Carr and Kemmis (1986:165) state that 'the aim of involvement stands shoulder to shoulder with the aim of improvement', since the people involved in the practice that is being studied

are to be involved in all the phases of the cycle of AR (which I mention in more detail in section 4.2.3). Zubber-Skerit (1996:83, cited in Cohen et al. 2011:345) suggests that the goals of any AR project 'are to bring about practical improvement, innovation, change or development of social practice', and allow the practitioners to understand their practices. Carrying out AR 'has the potential to be a major component in the continuing struggle to improve second language teaching' (Crookes 1993:137).

Up to this point, I have outlined the numerous areas and contexts in which AR can be conducted, paying special attention to the field of applied linguistics and education in which improvement and involvement are expected through intervention. I would like now to connect AR more specifically to the benefits for those who are in the best position to conduct it in a classroom: the teachers. Dörnyei (2007:191) argues that 'the most important tenet in action research concerns the close link between research and teaching as well as the research and the teacher'. Many scholars (e.g. Burns 2005; Carr and Kemmis 1986; Dörnyei 2007) have also acknowledged AR as a means for teachers to become agents rather than recipients of information about language learning and teaching. Burns (2005), for example, provides a list of benefits in terms of the skills that teachers develop when conducting AR. These skills help teachers become responsible for their own development; that is, they are the agents for change and improvement in their practice. According to Burns (2005:68) through AR teachers research real and puzzling situations; implement action where and when they think improvements are possible; make improvement through action and reflection; and recognise and translate evolving ideas into action monitor and evaluate the effects of the action taken, with a view to continuing improvement, among others. Ferrance (2000:1)

also includes some benefits and powerful justification for teachers to immerse in AR, such as:

- ❖ Work best on problems that they have identified for themselves
- ❖ Become more effective when they are encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently
- ❖ Help each other when working collaboratively
- ❖ Help each other in their professional development by working together.

From benefits mentioned by Ferrance (2000), we can observe a tendency to define AR as an activity that is carried out solely in collaboration with other teachers, as many other scholars suggest (e.g. Burns 2005; Patton 2002). Dörnyei (2007:191), for example, argues that 'action research is conducted by or in cooperation with other teachers'. However, as Cohen et al. (2011:348) propose, 'it is possible for action research to be an individualistic matter as well'. Although Burns (2010:Ways of doing AR section, para. 1) states her preference for AR in collaboration with others, she acknowledges that it is likely to notice 'different ways that teachers have been involved in AR' (see also Burns 2009). According to Burns (2010:Ways of doing AR section, para. 1), '[o]ne approach is for individual teachers to undertake their own projects either through assignments for credited programs or for their own professional development'. Whitehead (1985:98) explicitly writes about AR in individualistic terms. According to Whitehead (ibid), a teacher can ask herself or himself about a problem observed, the possible solutions, the manner to direct the solutions, and the evaluation of outcomes to take subsequent action.

Taking this into account and considering my personal (and, so far, individual) interest in carrying out this study in my university, I conducted research 'individually'. That is, I was the only researcher involved in the study. Nevertheless,

I also think that there could be an inherent collaboration from colleagues, teachers administrators, students, parents and, perhaps, public officials (Gebhard 1999; Walsh 2001), even though they may not be directly participating in the research. The only requirement, in this aspect, for AR to be successful is to inform the participants 'that they are part of the planning decisions and that they can contribute to the quality of their education by their willingness, for example, to be videotaped' (Gebhard 1999:62). In that way, I believe that the cooperation in this research came from the authorities that conferred permission to do this research in my university, the teachers who agreed to be interviewed, and the participants approving to be interviewed and observed, as well as accepting my intervention.

4.2.2 Characteristics of action research

I have already brought up some of the characteristics of AR (e.g. it implies understanding a situation; it seeks for improvement; it can be in collaboration or individually). Additionally, I would like to mention some other important characteristics and principles that also applied to my study, that helped me focus on the development of my investigation, and that were in accordance with the characteristics of QR. Cohen et al. (2011:346) mention some of the characteristics proposed by Hult and Lennung (1980:241–250) and Mckernan (1991:32–3). For them, action research:

- ❖ Is taken directly in situ
- ❖ Is undertaken within an agreed framework of ethics
- ❖ Focuses on those problems that are of immediate concern to practitioners
- ❖ Tends to avoid the paradigm of research that isolates and controls variables
- ❖ Is formative, such that the definition of the problem, the aims and methodology may alter during the process

- ❖ Includes evaluation and reflection
- ❖ Contributes to a science of education
- ❖ Uses feedback from data in an ongoing cyclical process

Cohen et al. (2011:346–347) also refer to Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) work that suggests that AR has key principles. These principles state that AR is an approach to *improving education* by making changes and learning from the consequences of those changes, as well as by requiring people to put their beliefs and practices to the *test* and to be open to accept wrong assumptions about their own practice. AR, according to the principles listed by Kemmis and McTaggart (ibid), develops through the self-reflective spiral of cycles: planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and then re-planning in the light of the results of the first cycle.

4.2.3 Cycles of action research

One important characteristic approach of AR stands out that it is carried out as a cyclical or spiral process that is associated with a series of steps that teachers can use to investigate their practice and answer questions related to that practice (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012; Richards 2003; Gebhard 1999). These processes include 'the systematic and deliberate thinking back over one's situation' (Russell and Munby 2002:3) and this is essentially an on-the-spot procedure especially intended to deal with a specific problem (Cohen and Manion 1994) after an event through self-critical reflection. The step-by-step process is frequently 'monitored over varying periods of time and a variety of mechanisms (e.g. questionnaires, diaries, interviews and case studies)' in a way that the researcher is able to modify, adjust, and redefine actions as many times as are needed in order to afford lasting benefits to the ongoing process (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012:51).

Lewin (1952, cited in Carr and Kemmis 1986), who coined the phrase and is considered the father of AR, described the process in terms of *planning*, *fact-finding* and *execution*:

Planning usually starts with something like a general idea. For one reason or another it seems desirable to reach a certain objective. [...] The first step, then, is to examine the idea carefully in the light of the means available. Frequently more *fact-finding* about the situation is required. If the first period of planning is successful, two items emerge: an 'overall plan' of how to reach the objective and a decision in regard to the first step of action. [...] The next period is devoted to *executing* the first step of the overall plan. In highly developed fields of social management or the execution of a war, this second step is followed by certain fact-findings [...] or reconnaissance [...]. This reconnaissance of fact-findings has four functions: evaluate the action by showing whether what has been achieved is above or below expectations; it would serve as a basis for correctly *planning* the next step; it should serve as a basis for modifying the overall plan, and finally, it gives the planners a chance to learn; that is, to gather new general insights [...]. The next step again is composed of a circle of planning, executing, and reconnaissance or fact-finding for the purpose of evaluating the results of the second step, for preparing the rational basis for planning the third step, and for perhaps modifying again the overall plan.

(Lewin 1952, cited in Carr and Kemmis 1986:162–163. My italics)

In Lewin's description, the steps follow a cyclical or spiral (or what I visualise as a zigzag) process in which one step could lead back and/or forth from another. For example, during the execution phase, more fact-finding is required to define a new plan of action if necessary; thus, the circle starts again. According to Burns (2005), several variations of Lewin's original model of the process have been proposed over the years. She argues that possibly the best version is the one devised by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988:276), who proposed four essential movements evolving through a reiterative and self-reflective spiral or loop, and repeated according to the scope, purposes and outcomes of the research:

Plan ⇨ Act ⇨ Observe ⇨ Reflect

The *Plan* stage pretends to recognize a real problem and potential for possible and

effective action. This first stage proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, cited in Burns 2005) is followed by the *Act* stage that involves intervention in a deliberated and controlled, but critically informed, way towards improvement. After the intervention, the *Observation* stage takes place. In this stage, the effects of the action and the outcomes are evaluated ‘using “open-eyed” and “open-minded” observation plans, categories and measurements’ (Burns 2005:59). The last stage is the *reflection* that is evaluative and descriptive and tries to make sense of the processes, problems and constraints found during the intervention. The aim of this last stage is to evaluate results and define possible new actions. Even though Kemmis and McTaggart define these stages as essential movements in a spiral self-reflection, that are repeated in the light of the purposes and outcomes of the research, this proposal has been criticised for its ‘over-representations of AR as a series of fixed and predictable steps’ (Burns 2005:59). For instance, there are suggestions of a more dynamic approach (Elliott 1991) and a less systematic model (McNiff 1988).

In the spirit of improving and making the AR cycle more flexible and adaptable to practitioners’ needs, Gebhard (1999) included one more element to the cycle that begins with setting a goal. Gebhard (ibid:63) suggests that it is necessary to identify and pose a problem or concern to be studied:

setting of a goal ⇨ planning an action ⇨ implementing the action ⇨ observing the action ⇨ reflection on the action

Richards (2003) also supports the four stages proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), but recommends beginning the process with the reflective phase; which in my view is a manner to identify a problem that the researcher wants to address, as

Gebhard (1999) suggests. Richards (2003:24–25) describes the process as follows:

The process begins with reflection on some aspect of the practitioner-researcher's work that leads to possible lines of intervention, then once the nature of the intervention has been decided a plan is developed and implemented with the context of professional practice. The implementation is monitored by the practitioner-researcher(s) (and possibly others, in the case of a team project or complementary projects) and when analysis of this leads to a better understanding of relevant processes, this is used as the basis for further reflection, which in turn may indicate the need to plan further intervention.

As Burns (2005) states, the processes of AR are essentially flexible and subject to modifications in direction, depending on the results of the initial action and the outcomes and interpretations: 'at this point, a further cycle of interventions, plans and actions might be initiate' (Burns 2005:59). Although this description may suggest an endless process of AR, in practice researchers may set limits if viable or desired, or a project may focus on a single cycle (Richards 2003:25).

4.2.4 Action Research focus for this study

For the purpose of this study, I based my AR on the four basic elements of the cycle proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart in 1988, plus the integration of some of the 'identifiable and interactive phases' that Burns (2005:59) presents in a framework (Figure 7). Burns's phases, in my view, present more flexibility and fluidity of the process, and show a more inclusive approach that allows a close and critical analysis of the context of the research. These phases are the result of her working with a group of teacher researchers in Australia, who perceived AR as a series of 'interrelated experiences' (Burns 2005:59).

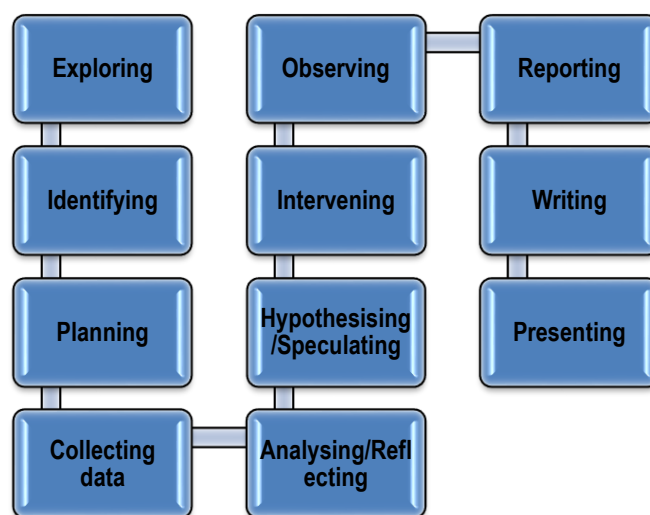


Figure 7: Burns' (2005) framework of AR

Some people might object the manner in which I present Burns' phases (Figure 7) because the arrows give the impression of being a lineal process. However, I want to make clear that neither Burns nor I suggest this has to be done in a lineal way. As Burns states (2010:What is action research section, para. 6) '[a]lthough these processes sound as though they occur in a fixed sequence, in reality they interact dynamically with each other as the researcher's insights deepen'. In the current study, the phases that Burns proposes were specially emphasised in the first cycle of AR in this study. For a second and subsequent cycles, the four basic phases were kept (Figure 8), although some elements of Burns's framework were intertwined. I now try to categorize Burns's phases into the four basic elements of the cycle that, at the same time, provides a general panorama of the process I followed during the study.

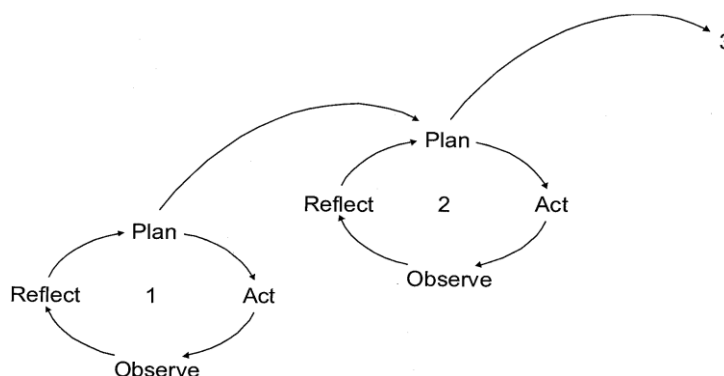


Figure 8: Cycles of AR

I situated the *exploring*, *identifying*, and the *planning* phases that Burns (2005) classifies (Figure 7 above) as integrative of (what I called) a 'major' *Planning* phase or Exploratory phase of the study. Generally speaking, this was because in order to make a plan of action, it was necessary to reflect on and explore practice in order to identify issues of interest or potential situations to base research (Burns 2005). Once I had identified a problematic situation that I wanted to address and improve, I drew a viable plan for gathering data and intervening, as proposed by Burns. The next logical step would have been the Acting phase in which intervention was carried out. Nevertheless, Burns (2005) suggests that, after the initial action, it is necessary to use initial data-gathering techniques (e.g. interviews, review of documents) that help analyse useful data and stimulate early reflections in order to hypothesise, predict and define a better action plan based on the analysis of our reflection on initial data. Bearing in mind Burns' suggestion, mainly for a first cycle in which we delineate and detail our purpose of study, I considered these three phases (*collecting data*, *analysing/reflective*, and *hypothesising/speculating*) as part of the 'major' *Planning* phase. Therefore, I collected preliminary data through a questionnaire, a focus group, and journal entries written by the participants (see next section for details). After that, I reflected on the data collected and made plan to be implemented in the intervention.

Next, the *Acting* (or Burns's *intervening*) phase took place. This obviously involved the implementation of the intervention through a deliberated plan that included the use of tools, strategies, and values to foster reflection (see 5.6.3 for details). During this phase, *data collection* was also necessary to guide me to the next step: *Observing*. The purpose of this stage, as agreed by Burns, aimed to notice and evaluate the outcomes of the intervention or acting phase. This, in turn, elicited the *Reflecting* phase that served to make sense of and evaluate the findings of the

intervention. Burns does not consider reflecting as a separate phase, but includes it in the observation. For me, reflection is pivotal during the whole cycle of AR; however, I think that a special phase (as suggested by most researchers) should be dedicated to evaluate and critically reflect on the results of the intervention in order to define, if necessary, a new action plan to improve the practice and the intervention. During the reflecting phase, again, analysis of the new data led to the identification of 'new' issues and, ideally, a better plan of improvement for the following cycle of AR. As Zwozdiak-Myers (2012:53) states, 'successful strategies should be retained and built upon, whereas less successful ones should be modified or discarded in light of your reflection'. In the present study, I had the opportunity to include a 'major' planning phase in the exploratory phase, and five cycles of AR in the Intervention phase.

As evidence shows, AR definitely involves a more holistic and hermeneutic stance from an interventionist position, associated with a cycle of activities. According to Richards (2003), where it is used,

it embeds the research within a professional context where the practitioner seeks, through deeper understanding and intervention, to bring about changes in their working practices and to explore the emancipatory potential of their activities.

(Richards 2003:25)

As Edge (2001:4) and Burns (2005:61) declare, AR should contribute to the empowerment of teachers and position them as agents of their practice. Mann (1999) argues that teachers are the ones that can best document significant interventions and changes in their own practice. Nevertheless, as Mann (1999:1) suggests, a great number of teacher's actions are 'unconscious and routinised': 'sometimes they may not realise or be able to describe this complexity until they have begun a process of reflection or reading or both'. Kemmis and McTaggart

(1988:10) argue that ‘to do action research is to plan, act, observe and reflect more carefully, more systematically, and more rigorously than one usually does in everyday life’. For the teachers to engage in AR, it is important to take into consideration the principles and characteristics of this tradition to make it more efficient and precise.

As previously stated, one of the important characteristics of AR is the use of different methods to collect data. Therefore, in the next section I describe some of the data collection techniques I used during my research. Data collection and analysis derived from them ‘offer a potentially rich source of professional understanding (and incentive to action)’ (Richards 2003:25).

4.3 Research methods

An important feature of AR is related to data gathering, which may be used ‘to inform the planning and to provide a picture of the implementation’ (Richards 2003:25), as well as to ‘provide an accurate record of the outcomes of your teaching’ (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012:58). According to the latter author, we should collect two kinds of data for the purpose of the research:

1. Data that monitors what the teacher or researcher does, and which helps evaluate how successful he or she is at implementing plans.
2. Data that demonstrates the effectiveness of innovations as a whole.

It has been widely documented that there are two types of data collection techniques: quantitative and qualitative. Since the focus of my study is a qualitative approach, I focused on that kind of data collection. Qualitative techniques are related to any method used to gain insight rather than statistical analysis; e.g. unstructured observations, personal perceptions about what is observed, reflective

journals/diaries, some rating scales, documents, semi-structured interviews, and open-ended questions on questionnaires (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012:59). Creswell (2013:157) declares that, even though new forms of qualitative data appear in the literature, they are all classified into four types of information:

- a. *Observations*, ranging from non-participant to participant;
- b. *Interviews*, from closed-ended to open-ended;
- c. *Documents*, from private to public, such as research journals, autobiographies, etc;
- d. *Audiovisual materials*, such as photographs, compact discs, and videotapes.

Recently, new forms of data embracing the use of technology and the internet have emerged, such as texts from e-mail messages, academic platforms (e.g. *Moodle*), videotapes and photographs, and online social networking sites such as chat rooms (e.g. for focus groups) (Creswell 2013).

In the next section, I describe the main research methods I used to gather data that allowed me to analyse and reflect on throughout the cycles. I include brief details on the timing and process I followed to implement the research methods. It might be worth saying that the instruments and the data collected in the first phase of the study were intended only to identify the PSTs' level and habits of reflection. Tables 5 and 6 show a summary of data collected in both the Exploratory and the Intervention phase of this study:

Data	Details
Observation notes	2 groups: 4 seminars per group
Written reflections	27 students: 6–9 entries per student
Questionnaire	30
Focus group	1 group, 6 students

Table 5: Data collected in the Exploratory phase.

Data	Details
Journals or written reflections	8 students. 5 entries per student (up to 3 rounds per journal)
Group reflections (videoed)	5 sessions: 1hr. 3 min. 2 sec. 1hr. 2 min. 58 sec. 1hr. 7 min. 40 sec. 1hr. 0 min. 25 sec. 1hr. 0 min. 24 sec.
Facebook group	15 entries
Stimulated recall	1 students, 3 sessions: 1hr. 22 min. 17 sec. 1hr. 29 min. 12 sec. 1hr. 4 min. 56 sec.
Voice recording (peer reflection)	1 recording: 12 min. 27 sec.
Mid-term interview	3 students: 5 min. 59 sec. 9 min. 50 sec. 14 min. 34 sec.
Final group interview	1hr. 54 min. 15 sec.
Mentor teachers' interview	3 teachers 18 min. 3 sec. 12 min. 48 sec. 18 min. 25 sec.
Students not participating questionnaire	13 students

Table 6: Data collected in Intervention phase

4.3.1 Observations

Observations 'can be a quick and efficient method of gaining preliminary knowledge or making a preliminary assessment' of the state or condition of what is being observed (Walliman 2011:196). Creswell (2013) states that observation is one of the key tools for collecting data in QR. For him, observation is 'the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting' (Creswell 2013:166). According to Zwozdiak-Myers (2012:59), these observations 'enable you to identify any issues or problems and determine what you want to look at in more detail'. The observer or researcher can focus attention on 'physical setting, participants, activities, interactions, and conversations during the observation' (Creswell 2013:166). There are two types of observations, as acknowledged by some researchers (e.g. Dörnyei

2007; Bryman 2012): structured and unstructured observations. Bryman (2012) stated that structured observation, also called systematic observation, is a technique in which explicitly formulated rules for observation and recording are employed: 'These rules are articulated in what is usually referred to as an observation schedule, which bears many similarities to a structured interview schedule with closed questions' (Bryman 2012:272). According to Dörnyei (2007), structured observation involves a specific focus and concrete observation categories (mostly used in quantitative research), and involves completing an observational scheme. Contrary to structured observation, unstructured observation 'is less clear on what it is looking for and the researcher needs to observe first what is taking place before deciding on its significance for the research' and involves the use of narrative field notes 'often supplemented by maps or diagrams' (Dörnyei 2007:179). Dörnyei specifies that some combination of the two approaches can take place in practice. I considered my observations in this study as a mixture of both structured and unstructured observations. I centred my observations on identifying any evidence of reflection during the seminars (e.g. the topics being discussed, the level of reflection observed and the type of questions that mentor teachers asked). That is, I had a specific focus (structured observation) rather than simply entering the classroom with no clue of what I was going to observe. My study also fitted into the unstructured category because I did not use an observational scheme or schedule as described by Bryman (2012) or Dörnyei (2007) in which it is necessary to have (for instance) a range of systematic categories, or use of tally marks. During the study, I used a specific protocol for recording important aspects of the observation: the setting, the group observed, and the date. After these details, the page was divided into two columns: one for the description of the class (topics and activities) and the other for my comments or reflections (see Appendix 1 for a summary of notes). Creswell (2013) proposes this

type of observational protocol in qualitative research as a method for recording notes in the field. The use of notes is particularly relevant for researchers' observations in order to allow them to describe, for instance, events in a lesson. The observations helped me decide on the strategies, tools, and types of questions that I needed to include in the second phase of the study.

My role during the observations was that of a non-participant observer. I only watched and took notes on what was being observed (Creswell 2013; Bryman 2012; Dörnyei 2007). Because it was not my intention to intervene in any way in this exploratory phase of the study, but rather to observe and reflect on my observations, I stayed at the back of the classroom, in one of the corners, trying not to disturb the teacher or the PSTs' participation. It was a suitable position for me to observe individual and group work during the sessions, and also to pay attention to their interactions and their opinions.

4.3.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires can be very useful as a means of collecting information. According to Zwozdiak-Myers (2012), the way the questions are constructed is of significant importance to the effectiveness of the questionnaire. Zwozdiak-Myers (2012:58–59) suggests that the questions should be:

- ❖ Accessible: use appropriate language for the participants to understand; avoid using difficult grammar and double negatives.
- ❖ Concise: avoid information overload and minimise ambiguity.
- ❖ Unbiased: avoid leading questions that can cause biased responses.
- ❖ Clear: construct simple items and do not combine questions.

Where measurement is sought, then a quantitative approach is used; however, in the case where the research requires rich and personal data, then a qualitative approach might be more suitable. Cohen et al. (2011:382) suggest the appropriateness of open-ended questions 'as they can capture the specificity of a particular situation'. Open-ended questions are useful if the possible answers are unknown or the questionnaire is exploratory (Bailey 1994:120). These kinds of questions are particularly suitable for exploring complex issues, and also enable respondents to extend their answer as much as they wish. Open questions may be useful for generating items that will subsequently become the stuff of closed questions in a subsequent questionnaire or interview (Cohen et al. 2011:382). Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that they could also lead to unrelated and pointless information if they are too open and do not let the respondent know the information sought.

For this study, an open-ended questionnaire was applied to PSTs involved in the first phase of the study in order to explore their opinion on RP, and the tools and methods they used to reflect (See Appendix 2). The main reason I chose to use a questionnaire rather than an interview was because these students did not know me and they might have felt more confident by writing anonymously their opinion and answers to the questionnaire at this initial stage of the study. The questionnaire was administered after a month of the PSTs' teaching practice because most of the questions were designed to find out about the PSTs' habits and focus of reflection. Therefore, they needed some teaching and reflecting experience to be able to respond to the questions. Before administering the questionnaire, it was validated by a colleague and experienced researcher at the UQRoo. The process I followed for the validation was reported in my research journal (RJ), as I partially report below:

After [X] suggested some corrections, I rewrote the draft to have a clearer idea of the whole. I realised that the first question was kind of leading ss [students] to give a specific answer I wanted, so I decided to eliminate the second part of the question and ask them only to EXPLAIN. I think this is much better. I also changed little things: rephrased questions to make them clearer, and changed the layout [...] (i.e. I added bullets and more space between questions). I showed [X] the changes and she agreed.

(RJ/23-10-13/II2-13)

Once I had the validated version, I asked my supervisor to examine it too. At the end of the study, another questionnaire was distributed among the PSTs who had initially agreed to participate in the intervention but failed to do so. The motivation to do this was my need to corroborate their reasons to withdraw and to know if there was a specific or special circumstance or condition that would have motivated them to participate. I thought that it was important to know their opinion in order to plan or discard future implementation of the practice in my university and context. The questionnaire was completely anonymous to avoid possible biased responses.

4.3.3 Interviews

Interviews are used when we want to ‘tap into the knowledge, opinions, ideas and experiences’ of the interviewee (Wallace 1998:192). Wallace (1998) declares that interviews are by definition oral, and are more like conversations. In the same vein, Richards (2003:50, citing Burgess 1984:102 and Kvale 1996:5) suggests that interviews are described in terms of everyday interaction, as ‘conversation with a purpose’ or ‘professional conversation’. Richards (2003) states that, unlike ordinary conversation in which we interact and listen in order to participate and bring our own points to the discussion, interviews seek to encourage the speaker to provide the richest and fullest description or opinion possible without trying to put the interviewer’s point across (Richards 2003). The key, Richards advises, is open-minded listening.

Bell (2010:161) declares that ‘one of the major advantages of the interview is its adaptability’. For instance, interviewers can follow up ideas, probe responses, and research motivations and feelings. The respondents can provide information that written responses would conceal, for instance, the way an opinion is expressed. Richards (2003:56–57) identifies five types of questions that serve to: *open* the interview in which the interviewee is invited to provide a reasonably lengthy response (e.g. ‘talk me through that lesson’); *check or reflect* when the interviewer does not understand something; *follow-up* when the interviewee has raised an important aspect for the study, or there is a subtle indication of something else to be discovered; *probe* something when the interviewer considers that it is necessary to get more details; and *structure* the sequence of the interview when it is necessary, for example, to mark a change of topic ‘by using structuring moves such as “Can we move on to...”’ (Richards 2003:57).

The general classification of interviews includes unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews. Structured interviews are ‘at best a rare plan in qualitative research’ (Richards 2003:48), due to the inflexible way that questions are posed that generally leaves little room for variation in the responses (Dörnyei 2007; Zwozdiak-Myers 2012). The opposite type of interview is the unstructured interview, considered the most flexible style, which allows researchers to gather complementary evidence with only minimal interference and often provides very important information that helps researchers to indicate future research directions and prioritise issues (Walliman 2011). In this kind of interview, the researcher does not need a detailed interview guide, rather a few opening questions to elicit answers (Dörnyei 2007). My intention during the study was to have a middle ground in terms of the type of interview (not too closed, not too open), in order to create a more dialogic approach between the interviewer and the interviewees.

Therefore, I focused on semi-structured interviews since they offer a flexible style in which the researcher begins by identifying a number of key questions that not only elicit specific responses but also act as prompts for the interviewer to provide guidance and direction. The format in general was open-ended and the participants were encouraged to tell about the issue in an exploratory manner (Dörnyei 2007).

As a way to monitor and evaluate the activities developed during the intervention, a mid-term individual interview with three of the participants was carried out. The aim of the interview was to monitor how the participants were feeling during the (written, oral, individual, and group) reflections; especially regarding tools, collaborative and dialogic reflection, the non-threatening environment, and the constant questioning I included as values to trigger reflection. A final individual interview was also conducted with three mentor teachers of the *Teaching practice* subject. The purpose was to learn about their views on the importance, usefulness, and feasibility of RP in our curricula. Although interviews are generally undertaken on a one-to-one basis, researchers have the option of interviewing participants in groups. Zwozdiak-Myers (2012:60–61) declares that conducting group interviews has some advantages, such as the fact that they can elicit rich data as participants listen to one another; can make people feel less intimidated and willing to engage in discussion without restraint; are less time-consuming than individual interviews; and provide information that can be explored in detail in subsequent individual interviews. The major disadvantages of group interviews to take into consideration are that ‘the emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression [...], [and] the group may be dominated by one person and “groupthink”’ (Fontana and Frey 2000:652). In this study a final group interview (GI) was carried out as a way of evaluation of the study from the participants’ perspective. They were asked about their experience with the tools and strategies used during the intervention,

the values promoted (collaboration, dialog, enquiry, non-threatening environment), and their opinion on RP.

In the initial stage of my study, I conducted a focus group (FG) interview. This is considered a special type of group interview that is based on the cooperative experience of group brainstorming; that is, 'participants thinking together, inspiring and challenging each other, and reacting to the emerging issues and points' (Dörnyei 2007:144). Creswell (2013) state that FGs are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees provides the best information and when time to collect information is limited. According to Dörnyei (2007), the interaction among interviewees can produce high-quality data because it creates a 'synergistic environment' that provokes deep and useful discussion. As Zwozdiak-Myers (2012:60–61) declares, a FG can elicit rich data as participants listen to one another and make comments on what they hear; also, it can make people feel less intimidated, and willing to engage in discussion without restraint. FG interviews should range between 6 to 10 participants to make it easier for everyone to participate. However, with this approach, care must be taken to encourage all participants to talk and to monitor individuals who may dominate the conversation. Taking into account that the PSTs knew each other but did not know me (at the time the interview was conducted), I considered the FG to be the best option. I believed that they would feel more confident in expressing their thoughts about RP within a group of people whom they knew; whereas they might have felt intimidated by me in a one-on-one setting. The FG served to extend answers from the questionnaires and for me to identify the manner in which the PSTs reflected, in terms of when and where they did it, and how systematic they were, which is one of the characteristics of an effective reflective practitioner (Ur 1999; Zeichner and Liston 1996; Stenhouse 1975); what they focused their attention on (to identify

levels of reflection); and how they preferred to reflect (to verify systematisation, as well as levels of reflection, tools, and strategies to be used during the next phase). The guiding questions for this instrument also had a process of validation.

As a summary, I conducted a semi-structured FG, semi-structured individual mid-term interviews with three participants, a final semi-structured group interview with all the participants; and semi-structured individual interviews with three mentor teachers. It is worth indicating at this point that the information collected through these interviews (excepting the FGs) are integrated in the discussion and conclusion chapters (rather than in the analysis) as supporting information to evaluate the intervention.

4.3.4 Journals

PSTs of the ELM at UQRoo are required to write journals or diaries in order to tell about their experiences during their teaching practices. They use 'event-contingent' diaries that require participants to provide a self-report each time their teaching practice is achieved (Dörnyei 2007:157). Dörnyei (2007) and Gebhard (1999:79), who both use the term 'teaching journal', declare that journals represent a first person account of teaching experiences. A teaching journal can also function as a place to celebrate discoveries, successes, and 'golden moments', as well as criticise, doubt, express frustrations and raise questions (Bailey 1990:218). In addition, Gebhard (1999:79) suggests that 'it can create an opportunity to confront the affective aspects of being a teacher, including what annoys, disconcerts, frustrates, encourages, influences, motivates, and inspires us'. The idea of a diary or a teaching journal is to write about teaching experiences as regularly as possible over a period of time, then to analyse these entries for patterns and noticeable events. The purpose of PSTs keeping diaries in the ELM was for them to reflect on

what happened during their lessons. I used these accounts to gather evidence of my participants' experiences, processes, and levels of reflection in both stages of the research. During the intervention phase, I aimed to show them how to make this tool more interactive and productive for them through a dialogic approach. Based on the concern about time (something they expressed during the FG and in the questionnaire), I made a decision to ask them to write only five or six reflections, one every two or three weeks, mainly because it would not be overwhelming for the students (as it might have been to write daily or weekly reflections), and it would give them time to write their reflection and follow the process that I recommended (see below). The instructions (process) to write their dialogic journal (DJs) were sent via email to the PSTs:

- » I'll send you guiding questions to initiate reflection (the whole process will be via email).
- » Write your reflection and send it back to me.
- » I'll write comments or questions and send your journal back for you to respond and give your opinion.
- » You respond to the comments and questions and send it again to me.
- » I'll read it a second time and write more comments/questions if needed, before returning it to you.
- » If there are more comments and questions, you need to respond to them, and send your journal to me one more time. I'll read it again and decide if another round of questions/comments is necessary.

(RJ/24-01-14/1118–29)

For this task, I created a three-column form for the PSTs to use for our DJ (Figure 9). In the first column, they had to write their reflections, based on the instructions and guiding questions that I sent them by email (see Appendix 3 for guiding questions). The second column was to write my first reactions to their reflections, including questions or comments. In the last column, they had to respond to my questions (this was considered a first round (R1) of the DJ). In case I had more questions or comments to their responses in column three, I used a different colour to write, and they had to reply using another colour in the third column. The only

purpose in using different colours was for us to be able to distinguish the second (R2), or sometimes the third round (R3) of our dialogue (see example of DJ in Appendix 4).

REFLECTION No. _____		
Name: _____		Entry (date): _____
REFLECTION	QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS	RESPONSES

Figure 9: Three-column form for dialogic written reflection

The initial questions sent to all the participants were asked only as guiding questions. The PSTs were told that they did not need to answer all of them but use them to generate ideas for their writing in the DJ. The subsequent rounds of questions were asked depending on the PSTs' responses after the first set of questions, and not all of them were made to all the participants. Collaborative reflection was also emphasised during this study, so for the journal I suggested to students sharing their written reflections with a peer in order to get feedback. Only two PSTs chose to work together and read each other's reflections in order to ask questions or write comments.

It is a common recommendation in social research that the researcher should keep journals (Dörnyei 2007) that 'show your readers the development of your thinking, help your own reflection [...]; and provide ideas for the future direction of your work' (Silverman 2005:252). Cryer (2000) recommends that researchers should record in their journals what they do, where, how, when, and why they do it. Researchers should also write about what they read, the data they collect and how they process it, the outcomes of the data analysis, particular achievements, feelings about what

is happening, any relevant idea for the research, and everything else that influences the researcher. As a researcher, I kept a *research journal* in order to have a systematic record of my activities during the study, my reflections on the processes of the interventions and observations, new ideas for future action, and feelings, among other issues that emerged. My intention was to constantly review it to reflect on what I did and how it worked, and to generate or redefine plans that guided my research. As Zwozdiak-Myers (2012) observes:

You need to record this process with consistency and clarity throughout your investigation, indicating the basis upon which any changes are made [...]. Your results and discussions provide opportunities for reflection and cross-referencing your findings.

(Zwozdiak-Myers 2012:61)

4.3.5 Group reflections

Based on the literature about the benefit of collaborative reflection (section 3.2.8), I decided to include this activity in order to give the PSTs the opportunity to reflect as a group, to share their reflection on their practice, share ideas to help each other with possible problematic situations, and have a supportive group during the process of learning to be English teachers. We had five sessions, which were videoed and helped me know the students better as well as distinguish their needs in terms of strategies and teaching tips. I tried to create a relaxed environment by being friendly with them and promoting the free expression of ideas. I usually started the sessions with small talk and comments about daily life to break the ice. After that, the first question to start the sessions was about their recent experiences with their teaching, trying to focus their attention on their practice and how they had been feeling, if they had faced any special situations or critical incidents, etc. Even though I had a list of questions to lead every session (see Appendix 3), I preferred to follow the flow of the conversations, asking the students to provide details and

their personal opinions about what was being expressed. During the GR meetings, I tried to ask questions to help them progress in their level of reflection. I also took advantage of the time with them to offer some hints to be considered for the following meeting and in the written reflections (resulting in reflective strategies to consider). The strategies were introduced as prompts and follow-up questions in the DJ and the GR, as well as pieces of advice at the end of the GR session, as summarised in the example bellow (GR2/researcher/T160&164):

Read something about your specific concern, get informed, know what to do and how to do it [...] We must always discuss alternatives, what research and researchers say about a topic that might be causing me a conflict; think about how that [what the researcher says] applies to your own practice and reality [...]. Ask for someone else's opinion; use what you learned in previous classes of the ELM; ask your classmates "What would you do?" and "How would you do it?" [...].

4.3.6 Facebook group

Considering the benefits of the use of technology in the process of reflection covered in 3.2.7 and the usefulness of Facebook (FB) for participants to engage in some academic activities such as sharing experiences (Steinbrecher 2011), I created a FB group. This was intended to serve as a space for PSTs to reflect, in a friendly environment, on their teaching experience, and to share ideas, activities, materials, problems, questions, articles, or any other document that they might find useful in their training as English teachers. Six PSTs agreed to participate in this activity; however, only two or three of them regularly posted something on the group, mainly answering my questions. Apparently, most of them were not really interested in participating. Despite my encouragement, the majority of the PSTs were not responsive, so I decided to stop the activity before the end of the study. For the purpose of the analysis in Chapter Six, I included some data from the FB group as complementary and supporting information.

4.3.7 Other instruments

Two activities were done during the intervention phase but were not included in the analysis of this thesis due to space constraints and, mainly, because they were done by one or two PSTs; hence they did not provide enough data to be integrated, and I would not be able to generalise the findings and guarantee the validity (Maxwell 1992) of data in an AR context. However, I would like to include them in the account as evidence of activities realised during the intervention.

1. *Stimulated recall (SR)*: Videoed classes were suggested as a tool to trigger reflection through stimulated recall. Initially, five students consented to participate, but only one was able to do it since I could not obtain permission in a private school (where the other PSTs taught), due to the school policies for videoing and observing classes by externals.
2. *Voice recording (VR)*: The idea for this activity emerged as an alternative to SR that was not possible to achieve. I suggested VRs as a complementary reflective exercise to do immediately after the PSTs' lessons. Initially, six PSTs assented, but only two of them did the activity once.

Up to this point, I have described the main methods and instruments I used in order to collect data during my study. Now, I would like to provide a description and a brief account of how I gained access to the fieldwork, how the ethical issues concerning the research were looked after, and how the piloting of instruments was carried out.

4.4 Access to fieldwork and ethical issues

4.4.1 Fieldwork: Gaining access

Creswell (2013:81) states that ‘the first stage involves gaining access to official permission to undertake one’s research in the target community’. Even though I had previously contacted the new head of the English Language and Education Department (ELED) via email (who conferred informal permission to work), it was important to formalise my intention to conduct this study. Therefore, an official letter explaining the purpose of the study, the benefits of conducting this study, and a brief but accurate explanation of the phases was sent. I visited the head of the ELED in order to give him the opportunity to ask as many questions as he needed, as well as to obtain his signature on the consent form. After that, I followed the same process with the mentor teachers who taught the *Teaching Practice* courses. It is important to note that in the UQRoo it is not necessary to obtain any permission or ethical approval since it does not have an ethical board or committee. In actual fact, the UQRoo encourages and supports lecturers to carry out research for the improvement of the programmes and the development of teachers and the institution. Therefore, as a lecturer in the UQRoo for many years, obtaining permission to do research was trouble-free for me.

Lastly, gaining access to individuals (participants) was key for the study. I asked the mentor teachers of the *Teaching practice* subject for permission to use one hour of their class in order to explain to the PSTs about activities to be carried out. For each phase of the research, I personally invited all the students, verbally explained the whole process, and gave them a letter of information in which I included the details about the study. I also provided a different consent form per

phase, because the participation of the PSTs differed in each phase (see Appendix 5).

4.4.2 Ethical considerations

‘Ethical considerations pervades the whole process of research; these will be no more so than at the stage of access and acceptance, where appropriateness of topic, design, methods, guarantee of confidentiality, analysis and dissemination of findings must be negotiated with relative openness, sensitivity, honesty, accuracy and scientific impartiality.’

(Creswell 2013:83)

Dörnyei (2007) declares that social research is about people's lives in the social world and, therefore, it inevitably involves ethical issues. Punch (2005) points out that ethical issues are more delicate in qualitative research due to their genuine interest in personal views and because they often target sensitive or intimate matters. Researchers face ethical issues that come up during the data collection in the field and during the analysis and dissemination of their research reports (Creswell 2013), mainly if interviews and observations are included (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012). This is the reason why a researcher needs to be careful with aspects such as confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity. It is indispensable, then, to inform participants of details concerning the research, providing information of what they need to do, as well as possible negative outcomes, to avoid deception that ‘can often result from thoughtlessness, oversight or taking matters for granted’ (Cohen et al. 2011:88). Johnson and Christensen (2004:111) pointed out that QR may include elements that ‘muddy the ethical waters’ and merit careful consideration during the study. Some examples of such sensitive aspects are:

- ❖ *The amount of shared information.* How much information should be shared with the participants about the research so as not to cause any response bias or even non-participation.

❖ *Anonymity*. Participants should remain anonymous, but the researcher often needs to identify the respondents to be able to match their performances on various instruments or tasks. However, only the researcher will know this information.

As Zwozdiak-Myers (2012) suggested, before undertaking AR, the researcher needs to keep in mind ethical implications throughout the study. Hence, for this study I needed to guarantee that the participants clearly understood what the study was about, by informing them (through a letter of information) about the purpose of the research, the benefits they would obtain, and the instruments I would be using to collect data without providing details that might influence their responses and reactions to the study. I asked them for permission to use the information collected in my written and oral presentations of the findings with my PhD panels and final examination, as well as for presentations in future conferences and publications. Respondent validation was also considered. The participants were given the right and the option to revise the transcripts and the preliminary findings reports to ensure that they agreed with what was being reported. These ethical considerations are closely related to privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, for which I now provide more details and explain how they were looked during and after the study.

4.4.2.1 Privacy, anonymity, confidentiality

In Dörnyei's (2007) words, it is a basic ethical tenet that the participant's right to privacy and anonymity must always be respected and that they have the right to decline to answer questions or to withdraw from the study without offering any explanation. According to Cohen et al. (2011), the right to privacy means that a person has the right not to participate in the research, not to be interviewed, and

not to answer telephone calls or emails regarding the study. For the sake of this study, I informed participants of their right to withdraw at any time, and to refuse to take part in any or all of the research. I verbally provided details of the two phases of the study, so they could decide if they wanted to participate in only one or the two phases, or none of them. They were also told that the results of their RP during the study would not affect their grades of the *teaching practice* subject. Before signing an informed consent form, they had the opportunity to ask as many questions related to the study and its implications as they wished. By giving participants the opportunity to decide, they would not feel any kind of pressure to participate.

Since '*anonymity*' is a promise that the 'information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity' (Cohen et al. 2011:91), and that 'even the researcher will not be able to tell which responses came from which respondents' (Bell 2010:49), in my study I protected the participants' identity by asking them to provide a nickname, pseudonym, or alias (Creswell 2013) to refer to them during the analysis and oral and written reports and publication of the study. This was a very important element, as it would make the participants feel more confident about what they did and expressed during the study. Taking into consideration that it was not possible to guarantee absolute anonymity (Kaiser 2009; Walford 2005; Baez 2002) because they had known each other for a long time (Baez 2002), I recommended them not revealing their chosen nicknames or pseudonyms so the rest of the group would not be able to identify who provided specific information. The only way for the rest of the group to know the pseudonyms would be if they themselves informed each other about it. It would be their option to reveal their identity if they wanted (Baez 2002). Furthermore, I did not ask for any type of personal information, for them to describe their physical traits, nor provide

academic details, as proposed by Walford (2005). Anonymity is related to *confidentiality*, being a promise that any detail will be revealed to a third party. Confidentiality in this study was assured by giving attention to the organisation and storing the qualitative data (e.g. field notes, transcripts, and videos) in my personal computer. As proposed by Creswell (2013), I developed back-up copies of computer files, and protected files with a secret password so they cannot be easily accessed.

4.4.2.2 Written consent

As stated in the previous section, in order to gain support from participants, and to explain to them how their confidentiality and anonymity will be assured, a qualitative researcher needs to explain the purpose of the study and offer details in order to avoid deception about the nature of the research (Creswell 2013). The most recommendable way of informing about the study is by providing clear, brief, and frank written information that enables the participants to make a fair assessment of the project so that they can give informed consent (Walliman 2011). Dörnyei (2007:70, citing Cohen et al. 2000; Creswell 2003; Johnson and Christensen 2004) suggests what a written consent form usually needs: an explanation of the purpose of research and procedures to be followed; the tasks the participants will be expected to perform during the study; description of any risks or discomforts, benefits the participant may encounter/receive; a statement indicating that participation is voluntary and that the participant can withdraw and refuse to participate at any time with no penalty; an offer to answer any questions; and signatures of both the participants and the researcher agreeing to these provisions. All these details were included in the informed consent forms (see Appendix 5). In total, 43 consent forms (out of 49) were signed for the first phase and 21 for the second phase of the study. For the second phase, only eight

participants actively took part by writing journals, attending the GRs, and being part of the FB group.

4.4.3 Piloting

As Wallace (1998) states, both interviews and questionnaires should be *piloted* to probe whether they work as planned. Cohen et al. (2011) remark that everything should be piloted. According to them, the wording of questionnaires, for instance, is very important, and pre-testing is vital to their success as a pilot has numerous purposes, such as the increase of reliability, validity, and practicability. Wallace (1998) proposes that, during the piloting, the researcher needs to ask the respondents for any comments and suggestions to make the instrument more effective, as well as the following questions:

1. Were the instructions clear and easy to follow?
2. Were the questions clear?
3. Were you able to answer all the questions?
4. Did you find any of the questions: Embarrassing? Irrelevant? Irritating? Patronising?
5. How long did the questionnaire take to complete? (Note: in an interview, the interviewer would similarly want to check the length of the interview)

(Wallace 1998:132)

The piloting process for the questionnaire was done with the help of students from the UQRoo who were not involved in the study, but were part of the ELM and doing similar activities to the PSTs of the *Teaching Practice I* course: they were teaching English (as social service), and they were asked to reflect on their first teaching experience. Five of them answered the questionnaire and told me about the aspects Wallace (1998) mentions. For the interviews, I asked some colleagues at the university and my supervisor to revise the guiding questions and tell me about the feasibility and validity of the questions, according to the objectives of the interview and the research. After that, I piloted the interview questions with

students of the *Teaching Practice* course who did not take part of the study but knew about the activities carried out.

4.5 Data analysis account

I have previously described the research methods to collect during the study. This section aims to present an account of how I accomplished a preliminary analysis (for both phases in the research) as an iterative process that helped me make decisions on actions in the fieldwork. Following that, I provide an overview of how I analysed the data collected in terms of coding and theme generation.

4.5.1 Preliminary analysis in the fieldwork

A preliminary analysis of the data during Phase One and Two was carried out while I was involved in the fieldwork. In both cases, the goal of this preliminary analysis was to observe the outcomes in order to make decisions for subsequent plans of improvement. In the case of the exploratory phase, I made decisions for an action plan in the intervention phase; and in the case of the intervention phase, the analysis and reflection on the data helped me decide on the actions needed to help the PSTs in the process of reflection throughout the five cycles of AR undertaken during the study.

4.5.1.1 Exploratory phase

The instruments used in Phase One of the study helped me triangulate the information because I constantly compared responses from the questionnaire to responses in the FG, the PSTs' journals, and seminar observations (notes). However, it was not my intention to start assigning codes or categories during the exploratory phase (mainly due to time constraints). Hence, my initial or preliminary

analysis followed a more basic examination of data in order to observe and consider what the PSTs reflected on, if they reflected, and to identify their level of reflection. The preliminary analysis of instruments in this phase was as follows:

- ❖ *Observations*: using the two-column form (described in 4.3.1) as an instrument of analysis, I highlighted what I considered important aspects of the sessions in terms of evidence (or lack) of reflection, and wrote notes or comments on them. This initial analysis helped me identify the PSTs' level and focus of reflection during their seminars (RQ1). Even though I had not initially planned to evaluate the mentor teachers' manner of eliciting reflection, I also paid attention to the questions that they asked in order to see if those questions were triggering the PSTs' critical reflection on the topics that they discussed in class. As I stated in my research journal,

I think this interest is because I'm trying to figure out the kind of questions I'll need to consider during the intervention phase in order to foster reflection.

(RJ/28-08-13/II58–61)

- ❖ *Questionnaire*: I concentrated the results in a Word document in which I summarised and analysed the responses provided by the PSTs (see Appendix 2 for questionnaire). This instrument helped me identify information related to how the PSTs engaged in RP (RQ2).
- ❖ *Focus group*: before transcribing, I started a preliminary analysis of it by watching the video of the interview and writing down the PSTs' responses as a summary. My aim was to identify and analyse extended responses which showed the PSTs' opinions on RP, the way in which they reflected, their habits of reflection, and, additionally, their previous experience of reflecting upon the class, the peer observations that they had completed, and the co-teaching work that they were carrying out at that time. When I finished the

transcription of the video, I read it to corroborate information.

- ❖ *Journals*: due to time constraints (27 PSTs submitted from six to nine entries of their journals at the end of the term, leaving only two weeks before the start of the intervention phase), I randomly selected some of the PSTs' journals to explore and identify the focus and level of reflection. I underlined aspects that I considered relevant and wrote some notes or comments about the aspects on which they reflected, how they reflected, and if there was a sign of a certain level of reflection.

During the exploratory phase, I compared the outcomes from activities and instruments, looking for connections and relationships among data in order to reflect on the PSTs' level, focus, and habits of reflection (time, place, and systematisation). This preliminary analysis helped me create a plan of action for the next phase.

4.5.1.2 Intervention phase

There were five cycles of AR during the intervention phase. After every cycle, I did a preliminary analysis as follows:

- ❖ *Dialogic journals*: During the whole process of the DJs, I wanted to keep track of the PSTs' reflections. Consequently, I created a Word document per participant in which I wrote comments on the main topics that they focused on, the level of reflection they were developing (if this was so), and how they were responding to my questions and comments. My purpose with the latter was to notice and reflect on the way in which the dialogic process was working in the journals. Even though I did not aim to make an individual analysis per PST, this form was a record of how the PST's reflection was developing per cycle. This record was very useful to me when I was analysing

their reflections and deciding on the next step in my AR cycle during the intervention.

- ❖ *Group reflections*: after each session, I watched the video and took notes on the responses of the students. My intention was to observe the topics they reflected on, how they responded to my questions and their peers' questions and comments (interaction), and any type of information that would help me identify the process and development of reflection (e.g. a certain level of reflection). After watching and taking notes, I compared the results of the session with the DJs. Both of them also helped me define the questions and strategies for the subsequent cycle.
- ❖ *Facebook group*: I posted questions, articles, or pictures related to teaching for the PSTs to reflect. As mentioned before, this did not work as I expected, but the response of the PSTs to some of the entries helped me see what the interaction among them was like and how they reflected on the topics addressed.

This second phase of the study included all the stages of AR: plan, act, observe, and reflect. The logical sequence, once I implemented my plan, was to observe and evaluate the results of the acting phase. Then, I reflected on them in order to make sense of the outcomes and findings of the intervention. The DJs and the GRs are the core of this study, mainly because they were the most systematic tools used during the interventions by all the participants.

4.5.2 Formal data analysis process

I have provided a brief description of how I completed a preliminary analysis of the various instruments used in both phases of the study. The purpose of the preliminary analysis was merely to reflect on the outcomes in order to explore and

identify the PSTs' process and level of reflection (exploratory phase) and to define the actions of the AR cycles during the intervention phase. In this section, I describe how I analysed the data collected (once the intervention ended) in order to present the findings in this thesis.

4.5.2.1 Thematic analysis and coding

In order to analyse and present the findings of the study, I adopted a thematic analysis process, which 'organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail' and 'offers an accessible and theoretical flexible approach to analysing qualitative data' (Braun and Clarke 2006:79). I followed the six phases of thematic analysis that Braun and Clarke (2006:87) suggest:

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data: Reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis which consists in the selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected

extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

As suggested by Braun and Clarke's phases of thematic analysis (2006:82), before defining the themes that 'capture something important about the data in relation to the research questions', it is necessary to start with the coding of data. Walliman (2011:217) states that a valuable step when analysing is to organise the amount of data and clarify the relationships among concepts 'by identifying differences in it and thereby forming subgroups within [a] general category'. As Richards (2003:273) declares, 'analysis depends on identifying key features and relationships in the data, something that is difficult if not impossible unless some degree of order is imposed'. Furthermore, 'all the qualitative coding techniques are aimed at reducing or simplifying the data while highlighting special features of certain data segments in order to link them to broader topics or concepts' (Dörnyei 2007:250). For this, the development of a coding system is important since it facilitates the organisation of data and the analysis of important aspects. Before continuing, it is worth stating that for the purpose of this work, I considered Themes and Categories as synonyms. I name one or the other depending on the way it is referred by the researcher being quoted.

Due to my limited experience in research and the coding system, and having in mind the importance of analysing and organising my data in order to define the themes and interpret them (Wolcott 1994), I made the decision to be extremely systematic in the coding process and the generation of themes. Hence, I backed up and complemented Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases with the processes suggested by other researchers. The process that I followed while coding to generate themes is described below (see Appendix 6 for samples of the coding process).

Dörnyei (2011) suggests a *Pre-coding* stage (which coincides with Braun and Clarke's first phase of the thematic analysis) and as a preparatory move, in order to make sense of data and re-familiarise with it. I read and re-read the journals and transcripts, in order to reflect on them and note down my initial thoughts in my journal and memos (see Appendix 6, Figure A). Even though I had done this (as part of my preliminary analysis during my AR cycles), I believed that it was useful to do it again in order to see data from a different perspective and in a more complete and systematic manner (compared to the way I did it for the preliminary analysis).

The following step was to start the generation of *initial codes* (Braun and Clarke 2006; Richards 2003), in order to engage with data in a more detailed manner (see Appendix 6, Figure B). I followed an 'open mind' and 'free coding' of it to avoid 'premature commitment to particular categories' (Richards 2003:273). Richards also asserts that this process helps the production of labels, which suggests possible lines of organisations and will derive into future categories. As suggested by this author, I did this initial coding line by line. I highlighted passages relevant for the topic and added an informative label in the margin while I was reading (Dörnyei 2011). It was essential at this stage to keep an open mind and to produce as many new ideas and codes as possible, and it was also necessary to summarise the data (Bryman 2012). The labelling of data included 'some key words from the actual passage to make the preliminary codes more authentic' and as explicit as possible (Dörnyei 2011:251) (see Appendix 6, Figure B).

After the initial coding, I started collating codes into potential themes (Braun and Clarke 2006) in order 'to go beyond a mere descriptive labelling of the relevant data segments' (Dörnyei's Second-level coding 2011:252) and to look for patterns and identify more abstract similarities that emerge across the data (see Appendix 6,

Figures C, D and E). Selecting potential extracts was done after that. As Dörnyei states,

One way of launching second-level coding is to go through several respondents' accounts and list all the codes that we have identified in them. There will inevitably be some similar or closely related categories, which can be clustered together under a broader label. At this point we need to look at all the specific extracts that are linked to the newly formed broader category to decide whether the new label applies to all of them or whether some may need to be recoded. If the majority of the extracts fit the new system, this can be as a sign of the validity of the code. [...] In some studies this process is iterated more than once.

(Dörnyei 2011:252)

During the process of defining themes, I considered *constant comparison*, which is described as one of the terms of grounded theory by which connection between data and conceptualisation is maintained (Richards 2013; Bryman 2012). I visualised this process as a 'zigzag', which means constantly going back and forth from a selection of data to another selection of data, and from one category to another. This idea made me decide on using the grounded theory coding system (open, axial, and selective) in order to categorise my codes and organise the information to be presented, but mainly to make connections between categories (axial coding) and systematically relate them to other categories (selective coding) (Braun and Clarke's suggestion for reviewing and naming themes, 2006) (see Appendix 6, Figures F, G, H and I). I agree with Richards (2003:18, quoting Hemmings 1984:60–62), who states that probably 'the greatest attraction of grounded theory is that it offers a systematic way of analysing and interpreting the data, normally a messy and frustrating process'. My intention in using the constant comparative approach was to analyse the data collected (from different instruments) and compare them to each other in order to find representations of categories or themes that emerged, as well as relationships.

I used various sources for categorisations: memos, notes, and ideas from readings (Richards 2003). Walliman (2011:219) notes that we use memos 'to explore links between data and to record and develop intuitions and ideas'. Richards (2013:278) adds that memos serve to draw 'attention to points that might be relevant to the analysis'. While categorising, I kept in mind the essential features of an adequate category described by Richards (2003:276): the categories that emerge need to be analytically useful, empirically relevant, practically applicable, and conceptually coherent. Finally, I made sense of all my data and interpreted them according to the results that emerge during the analysis, but also linked them to the literature and other studies in the area. The whole process helped me name the definite themes and report of findings (Braun and Clarke final phase of thematic analysis 2006) in Chapters five and six.

The techniques that I used during my analysis included printed data in order to highlight relevant information, and written codes and initial categories or themes in the margin, using variously coloured pens. I also used filing cards, written memos, and my research journal. Additionally, I used the computer-aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) NVivo, to help me organise codes and relevant pieces of quotes (extracts) into themes. Using printed data and doing the selection of codes and themes electronically meant double work for me and was time consuming; however, I am the kind of person who works better with printed versions of the information or data. As Wolcott (2001:43) observes, when researchers manipulate data manually rather than electronically, it helps them 'visualise processes partly hidden by technology' and they get a 'physical feel for what they are trying to accomplish'. Hence, I preferred doing it this way first and then using software that helped me organise and store my data, making it easy to identify themes, memos, extracts, and all the information resulting from the analysis. It is worth saying that

the themes emerged during the coding process referred to the topics or focus of reflection that the PSTs included in their DJs and the GRs. Based on those themes, I was able to analyse the manner in which the PSTs reflected upon them.

To sum up, my analysis followed a data-driven inductive approach, with a combination of thematic analysis and data analysis processes, such as pre-coding and second-level coding (Dörnyei 2011); initial coding and categorisation (Richards 2003); and open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

4.5.2.2 Translating and transcribing

Most data from the exploratory and the intervention phases were written in English by both the researcher and the PSTs participating in the study. However, all the interviews and the GRs were conducted in the participants' first language (Spanish), which was their choice. I decided to give the option to choose between English and Spanish because I prioritised the facility for them to express their ideas and reflection rather than the use of English. As Cortazzi et al. (2011) state, the language choice for interviews can influence the data obtained. Furthermore, Mann (2010:10) argues that the language that the participants use 'is integrally related to the nature of the co-construction' and serves as a tool to build up co-constructed understandings among the speakers.

For the purpose of this study, the interviews and the group reflections were fully transcribed. Although the transcriptions took more time than expected, I made the decision to transcribe them entirely in order to be able to assess the full context in which the participants expressed an idea or opinion. After having the transcriptions, I asked a trained translator to translate some parts of the interviews and GR sessions. Having the whole transcription helped the translator to include a more accurate translation of the PSTs reflections. Once the translator sent me back the

interviews and GRs, I reviewed the translation in order to verify if there were some 'translation dilemmas' (Temple and Young 2004) such as ideas not well expressed in the translation (nuances), accuracy of lexical choice, and even typo mistakes. All the transcripts were printed for the analysis process.

It is worth mentioning that I did not include any type of special conventions to transcribe since it was not my intention to do discourse analysis of the data. However, to facilitate the reading of the transcriptions, I used some basic conventions that Richards (2003:182–184) suggests, such as a *period* to indicate the ending of a sentence; a *comma* to represent a 'continuing' contour, indicating that the speakers wanted to carry on; a *questions mark* to represent questioning or rising intonation; and an *exclamation mark* to indicate an exclamatory expression or animated tone. Moreover, I included some contextual descriptions in square brackets such as replacement of information (e.g. names), overlapped comments, and laughs.

4.5.2.3 Presenting data

Due to the various instruments used in this study, for the presentation of findings in chapters 5 and 6 I show in parenthesis the source of data. Immediately after an extract, the reader might find codes as follows:

Exploratory Phase	
Source	Coding: <i>example</i>
Focus Group	Source + Pseudonym + Turn: <i>FG/John/T175</i>
Questionnaire	Source + Pseudonym + Number of question: <i>Q/Kimberly/q1</i>
Journal	Source + Pseudonym and number of journal entry + line: <i>JPh1/Sophia06/II45</i>
Intervention Phase	
Journal	Source and cycle + Pseudonym + Round number + line: <i>JC3/August/R2/II45</i>

Group reflection	Source and number of session + Pseudonym + Turn: <i>GR4/John/T84</i> Note: Line numbers are shown instead of the turn when highlighting more specific statements: <i>GR2/Lea/II84</i>
Facebook	Source + Pseudonym + Entry number: <i>FB/Luna/Entry6</i>
Final group interview	Source + Pseudonym + Turn: <i>GI/Laura/T19</i>
Mid-term interview	Source + Pseudonym + Turn: <i>MTI/Sunny/T10</i>
Mentor teachers interview	Source + Pseudonym + Turn: <i>MT/Alicia/T20</i>
Researcher Journal	Source + Date of entry + line: <i>RJ/23-10-13/II2–13</i>

Table 7: Codes guide

Note: The quotations from the students' comments, dialogs and reflections have been included verbatim for the sake of authenticity. Hence, the reader will find some language inaccuracies.

Chapter Five: Exploratory phase findings

This chapter aims to analyse and discuss the main findings in the exploratory phase of the study. As stated in 4.2.4, this exploratory stage followed the first phases of the AR framework proposed by Burns (2005) (see Figure 7 in 4.2.4) in which it is necessary to use data-gathering techniques that will help us explore and identify useful information in order to stimulate early reflections in order to create a plan of intervention. As established in the introductory chapter, the RQ of this first stage intended to describe and investigate **(RQ1)** the process that the PSTs follow to reflect, and **(RQ2)** the level of reflection they had. The first RQ focused on the habits the PSTs had in order to become involved in reflection: when and how they engaged in reflections, what were the tools and strategies they used to reflect, and how the process of writing down was. This information helped me define the best approach to use with them in the following phase of the study. The research instruments that helped answer RQ1 were the questionnaire and the FG. RQ2 aimed to discover the level of reflection that the PSTs had during the exploratory phase of the study. Learning about the level they had, helped me decide on what levels of reflection to promote in the intervention phase. The journals written by the participants were the main source in answering RQ2 due to the number of entries (116) and, especially, the evidence they represented in terms of the aspects of the teaching practice that the PSTs focused their attention on and how they developed their thoughts or reflections. I supported the analysis of the levels of reflection with data that emerged from the seminar observations (notes), the questionnaires, the FG interview, and my RJ. Due to space constraints in this thesis, I focused the analysis on the themes that were most frequently mentioned by the PSTs.

In order to present the findings of the exploratory phase, I first direct my attention to describe the background knowledge that the PSTs reported about RP, moments of

reflection, and the process of writing down. Second, I include data to analyse the manner in which the PSTs' reflected upon various aspects of their practicum. Finally, I present the conclusions of the main outcomes in which I centre on answering the aforementioned RQs and stating how the data gathered shaped the plan for the intervention phase.

5.1 PSTs' background knowledge on reflective practice

As a way to explore the PSTs' background knowledge and opinion about RP, I started by asking them how they defined it, and how important and useful they thought it was. Most of the participants described RP as thinking about how they developed during the class, the difficulties they found, what they needed to improve, and what worked and what did not work during the class. Kimberly, for instance, declared that:

For me the reflective practice is [...] when, for example, my classmate and I start talking, and we tell to each other "Well, this worked, this didn't work"... or we say something like "Well, today the students were very anxious, we could have done this and not that." Things like that... Erm... [...] New ideas to improve my development during the lesson.

(FG/Kimberly/T30)

For Kimberly, and some of her peers, reflection was the opportunity she had to share her opinion about the class with the person with whom she was working (peer), in order to evaluate the class and to generate ideas for activities they needed to consider. Interestingly, most of the PSTs defined reflection in terms of interaction and the talk they had with their peers (collaborative and dialogic reflection). Self-evaluation was also a key word that the PSTs used when defining RP. Laura, for instance, said that RP was 'to analyse your own class development and the student's development during the lesson' (FG/Laura/T38). Generally speaking, the PSTs acknowledged reflection as their analysing events happening

in the classroom and the opportunity to look for solutions and improvement. This view was confirmed with their answers to the questionnaire when I asked them about the importance of reflection on their teaching practice. For example, Diamantina declared that:

I think it is important because that way you can have your thoughts and ideas clearer of what happened during your class, what you did wrong and right, and use that for future classes.

(Q/Diamantina/q1)

The PSTs also perceived reflection as holding out the possibility to identify areas of opportunity for upcoming classes. They saw that they could improve their practice by ‘developing new strategies’ (Q/Sunny/q1), ‘knowing what things are effective for students and also when techniques are not suitable [...] and find some solutions.’ (Q/Lea/q1).

A (follow-up) question asked in order to learn more on their perception on RP queried disadvantages they thought RP had. Some participants noted that there were no disadvantages since they thought that reflection only helped them improve their practice. However, other PSTs admitted that RP included some difficulties as follows:

- ❖ Lack of time
- ❖ Lack of objectivity
- ❖ Lack of evidence to support reflection
- ❖ Getting disappointed by actions and then being discouraged
- ❖ Paying attention only to negative aspects

Lack of time was the aspect that the most PSTs mentioned as a disadvantage, mainly because the final year of the programme, when they are also asked to write their reflections on their teaching practice, is very time-demanding for them (they

must prepare and present an English exam as a requirement for obtaining the degree; write a dissertation; attend classes, and perform their teaching practice).

Sofía wrote that:

[...] at this stage of the major I do not have enough time to do it [to reflect] because I have a lot of responsibilities and worries.

(Q/Sofía/q2)

Another disadvantage that the PSTs identified was the lack of impartiality in the reflections. This was viewed from two perspectives: the PSTs (lack of) frankness when self-evaluating, and their peer's subjectivity when providing feedback. The former was expressed by Alcatraz:

[...] you may think that you did everything good or that you may not want to accept that you failed in something.

(Q/Alcatraz/q2, emphasis by the researcher)

Apparently, Alcatraz was referring to two things. Firstly, her comment suggested that she might not have noticed her mistakes, possibly due to the lack of experience on what was correct doing in class. Luna backed up this view by indicating that 'sometimes I just don't realize that I am doing something wrong or that something can be done more efficiently' (Q/Luna/q2). Secondly, Alcatraz also considered a possible personal denial to recognise that she might be mistaken in her perception of the class or her performance. That is, one might detect that there was something wrong, but might not want to recognise it.

As for a peer's subjectivity while observing and providing feedback, Dan noted that 'observations from a partner or co-worker might be biased'. This opinion could have been related to a commentary he wrote before, in which he indicated that 'grasping a notion of one's mistakes and errors tends to be somehow difficult without aids (recordings, observations)' (Q/Dan/q2). Clearly for Dan, evidence-based reflections

are necessary to avoid any type of subjective feedback (see Mann and Walsh's 2013, and Walsh and Mann 2015 for Data-led reflection).

The PSTs were also asked about the tools and strategies that they identified and would be able to use in order to reflect. During the first term of their teaching practice the PSTs only reflected with their peers (by talking to them), solicited advice from experienced or in-service teachers, and kept their journals individually. Hence, their answers did not necessarily show the strategies and tools they were using at the time but the ones they thought could be used. They named the following tools and strategies (summarised in Table 8):

Strategies:	Tools:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Talking to a partner/friend/teacher » Writing notes » Writing questions » Writing a reflective essay » Keeping students' records » Writing down list of things to improve » Recording yourself » Observing other teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Diary/journal » Video recording (of their teaching practice) » Reflection sheets » Electronic diary

Table 8: Tools and strategies identified as useful

Mitzy, for example, indicated that 'a teacher's diary would be very helpful for personal reflective practice, and talking to a peer makes you reflect on how other people perceive what and how you teach' (Q/Mitzy/q4). However, other PSTs did not agree about using a diary. Zoé, for instance, indicated that 'it would be good to write on a sheet of paper my experience, but not like a diary' (Q/Zoé/q4). Writing on a daily basis was not considered a good idea, probably due to the fact that they had previously mentioned in the questionnaire that they did not have plenty of time.

Talking to someone was the strategy most mentioned by PSTs in the questionnaire and the FG. It was possibly because they had started their teaching practice with a peer. Conversely, during the FG they displayed their awareness of the fact that

they will not always have a peer to work with or share a class. They talked about having other options to get feedback on their teaching practice and reflect. For instance, Luna said she would do it with her 'sisters who are also teachers' (FG/Luna/T316). Luna expressed later that she preferred talking to someone about her teaching, even though she does not work with the same group of students nor has the opportunity to be observed by that person. Lea backed up Luna's idea of asking a colleague, or those she referred to as 'experienced teachers', (FG/Lea/T318) for help. Lea might have referred to the experienced teachers as the best source of help because she saw herself as a novice teacher still, not having the expertise to deal with and solve certain situations in the classroom. Some PSTs suggested other options for strategies and tools to enhance reflection. For instance, Dan included 'one's recording of the class and direct observation' (Q/Dan/q4). Even though he did not specify if he was referring to video or voice recording, Dan was aware of the usefulness of the tool. Such appreciation was also evident in the FG when I asked the participants if they thought there were other options for tools and strategies to foster reflection. Luna articulated her position as follows:

Well, I think of how the doctors always do their recordings of their work, right? [...] You could just talk and it would be much easier to just listen to the recordings later.

(FG/Luna/T302)

Luna clearly referred to voice recording as a support when reflecting. The PSTs commentaries on the tools and strategies during the FG showed me that they preferred talking, rather than writing their reflections. This was confirmed with their replies when I asked them if they would write their reflections if they were not mandatory for the *Teaching Practice* course. The answer was: 'Maybe not write them down, but do them' (FG/Laura/T309).

5.2 Individual and collaborative reflection

In the questionnaire, all the PSTs expressed that reflection should be both individual and collaborative. That is, they should reflect individually, taking advantage of the benefits of introspection and self-evaluation, but they should also have the opportunity to learn from others' opinions and points of view. Zoé provided a comparison between individual and collaborative reflection:

I think [we should include] both of them because when you reflect by yourself, you feel more comfortable and confident to assume your errors. However, sometimes you cannot realize your mistakes so it's important to have someone else who can help you.

(Q/Zoé/q3)

Zoé, much the same as most of the PSTs, saw collaborative reflection as an opportunity to get feedback on aspects that she was not able to notice about her own performance. Lilo and Mily also pointed out that collaborative reflection would give them the opportunity to 'get advice on how I can improve' (Q/Lilo/q3), and get 'orientation on what I am doing' (Q/Mily/q3). Although in the questionnaire they expressed the view that reflection should be both ways, in the FG I asked them which one they thought had been more functional for them (up to the moment of the interview). They all confirmed that it was collaborative reflection (rather than individual), and that they preferred reflecting with someone else since the experience had been positive and helped them to learn about things that they needed to improve. This can be exemplified in the following conversation during the FG:

Turn	Speaker	
185	Laura:	[...] When I'm observing her, I realize that what she did could help me in the future, and I can apply it later on. If something went wrong, well, I already saw it didn't work for her, so maybe it won't work for me... or... maybe it will.

- 186 Researcher: Okay
- 187 Kimberly: Well, also in the way that... maybe my partner doesn't know when some activities are going right or wrong. So, I tell her "Look, this activity was good"... And that is something that she can reflect on in order to repeat it or not [...].
- 188 Lea: In my case, it was my very first experience in front of a group. So, the fact that a person [...] who studies the same that I do and who teaches the same that I do, and understands, and who can give me some feedback about what I did, is always very useful to me.
- 189 Researcher: Okay.
- 190 Luna: [...]
- 191 Laura: [...]
- 192 Luna: Yeah... So, I thought that I was being strict with the students, and that I was very mean to them; [...] and then she said "No! You're being very, very nice! You have to be more... erm... assertive!"... yeah.
[...]. So, after her comment, [...] now I am a bit firmer with the students [...]

In this conversation, it is evident that the PSTs drew on collaboration to learn from what was observed (T185) or from getting feedback from peers (T187, T188, T192). Empathy seemed to be very important for them, as Lea (T188) noticeably perceived. This is the reason why it was not surprising to find out in the questionnaire that 24 (out of 29) participants indicated that they reflected in collaboration with a peer, or someone also involved in the teaching profession in order to share their experiences (as expressed in the FG by Laura: T213, T215). As Laura mentioned, and the rest of the PSTs nodded in agreement, the collaborative exercise was helpful 'to vent our frustrations' (FG/Laura/T221).

5.3 Reflection timing

The PSTs also reported about the moments when they reflected on their own practice. In the FG, most of the student teachers mentioned that they did it both immediately after their class and while they were teaching. However, in the questionnaire, most of them declared that they reflected on their way home (after

the class). Only seven PSTs reported in the questionnaire that they reflected during their teaching practice. Some PSTs chose two or more options in the questionnaire, indicating that they reflected before, during, and/or after the class, and/or at some other time of the day; for example, Lilo stated that:

I reflect at every moment: when I am teaching... erm... if I notice I made a mistake, I correct it. After the lesson... erm... we share what we experienced during the lesson... I mean with my partner. And then, after one or two days I write my reflections, so I re-think of what went right or wrong.

(FG/Lilo/T142)

Most of the PSTs in the FG reported that they reflected on their teaching practice while they were teaching (reflection-*in-action*). For instance, Kimberly said that she reflected 'during the lesson, to improve things and not to continue to make the same mistake' (FG/Kimberly/T147). The realisation that something is not working as expected was expressed by the PSTs as personal alertness; that is, individual reflection during the class. However, when they talked about their reflection after the class, they usually referred to the immediate time in which they shared their thoughts with their peers (collaborative reflection) about the class that just ended, and evaluated each other's performance (evidenced in Lilo's comment above). Lea, described that reflection after the lesson (on-action) used to be 'very automatic: when we are going out of the classroom, we immediately start reflecting about the lesson' (FG/Lea/T194). Other PSTs stated that they used to reflect later after the lesson. Kimberly, for instance, indicated that she reflected 'when talking to my mom at night' (Q/Kimberly/q6). In the questionnaire, the PSTs comments about when they reflected seemed to refer to oral reflection only. Therefore, I asked them in the FG about the writing down of their thoughts. The PSTs reported that they used to write their reflections in a period of one to three days after the lesson (e.g. Luna/T149).

Concerning reflection before the lesson, the PSTs referred to it as the moment when they were planning the following class with their peers (collaborative reflection). Luna explained that:

It is through the process of planning the next lesson that we get to talk again. [...] I tell [Laura]: "Last time, it seemed that the instructions were confusing for the students". So, we are thinking of ways to make things differently, because the last time didn't work as planned.

(FG/Luna/T149)

Interestingly, what they considered a reflection before the lesson could be labelled as a reflection-on-action and reflection-for-action, since they were recalling what happened in the preceding class in order to plan and improve future lessons. According to what was expressed during the FG, most PSTs were systematic in terms of when they reflected: before, during, or after the class, with special emphasis on the latter. According to the data in the questionnaires, the majority of the PSTs had a routine for when and what to focus their reflections on. However, four PSTs indicated in the questionnaire that they did not have a specific moment to reflect, which can be seen in Cyn's observation that her reflections 'are occasionally because I don't have time to do it' (Q/Cyn/q9).

5.4 The writing down

In order to learn more about the habits of reflection, I asked the PSTs how the writing down process was. The PSTs' responses in the interview were diverse. Lilo, for instance, said that she followed the guidelines provided by her mentor teacher, which included 'changes in our lesson plan, how you felt, body posture, [and] tone of voice' (FG/Lilo/T265). However, Lea, Kimberly, and August indicated that they did not follow the guidelines but they wrote as the ideas flowed at the moment of writing (FG/Lea/T252, FG/Kimberly/T256, FG/August/T262). Luna, on the other hand, reported a more systematic form to write her reflection:

I usually take notes right after my teaching. So, [...] I read them and then I try to remember [...] what I need to include in the writing. [...] I just try to write at least three paragraphs of the most important things, like the things that went well for us (one paragraph), what I need to improve (another paragraph), and then the rest, what things we can do, right?

(FG/Luna/T258)

Luna focused on problems encountered and solutions to improve her practice, and followed a specific order in her writing. The PSTs reported a tendency to focus their reports on both good and bad aspects of their teaching, as well as on looking for improvement. Apparently, when they used to sit and write in their journals was a good moment to think over how the class developed and the areas of opportunity, 'but now in a more personal way' (FG/Lilo/T142). Writing down their thoughts was essentially an individual activity. However, the PSTs took into consideration what they had discussed previously with their peers when they finished the lesson since 'there are things that I sometimes don't realise are happening, so I must take into consideration Luna's observations' (FG/Laura/T293).

5.5 Focus of reflection

The PSTs reported in the questionnaire that they usually focused their attention on aspects related to discipline, their tone of voice, how they provided instructions, their knowledge on the topic taught, and activities and materials. For instance, Claudia mentioned that she focused her attention on 'classroom management, ways of giving instructions, meaningful materials, activities that are adequate to the students' age, and discipline' (Q/Claudia/q10). In the FG, some PSTs were able to expand a little more on what exactly they centred their attention on in their reflections. Furthermore, evidence emerged from the journals showing more specific aspects on which the PSTs centred their attention and the manner in which they approached each topic. The foci or topics of PSTs' reflections were

categorised (see 4.5.2.1 for details on process of coding) into five themes (Figure 10):

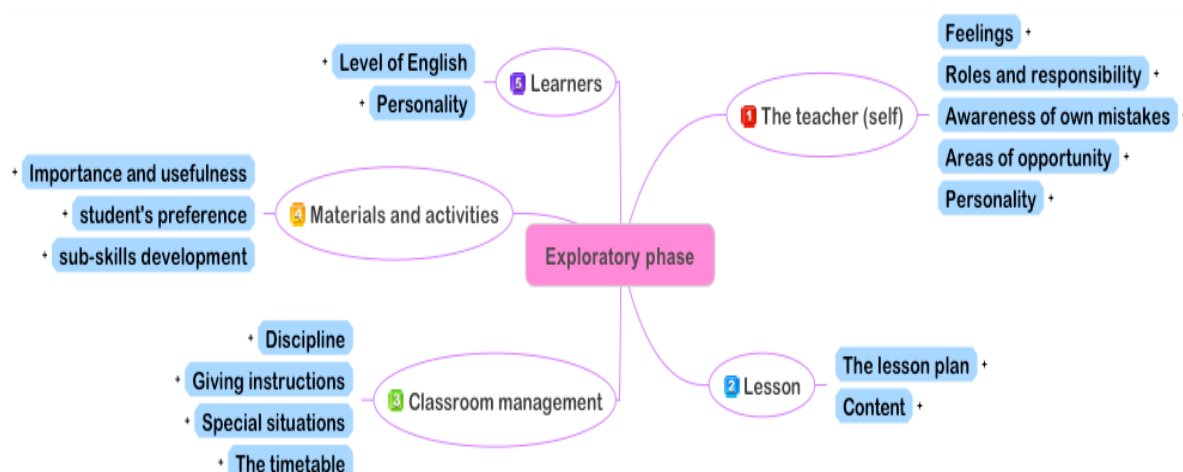


Figure 10: Themes Phase One

Although the findings are not particularly surprising (for instance, see Valli 1993; and Ur 1999 for similar lists), it is still worth looking to how the PSTs introduced their concerns. In the following sections, I intend to analyse and discuss the themes that were most frequently mentioned. Due to space constraints, I include in this analysis some examples of reflection of only the three most frequently sub-themes or topics of reflection in the exploratory phase (see Appendix 7 for a more detailed map). Aspects concerning materials, activities, and the learners are not discussed per se in this report; however, they are presented as part of the analysis of the three main themes because they overlapped. This decision was made after selecting data from the 116 journal entries analysed for this phase, and noticing that most data maintained a descriptive pattern and that there was much similitude among the PSTs' comments. It is worth noting that although data from the exploratory phase helped my decision-making for the intervention phase, it is the latter that is the core of the study and to which I would like to dedicate more space in Chapter Six.

5.5.1 Teacher (self)

The aspect that the PSTs most frequently mentioned in the journals in the first phase of the study was related to the PSTs themselves. They usually showed a descriptive level of reflection when talking about the following:

- ❖ Feelings
- ❖ Role and responsibility
- ❖ Awareness of own mistakes
- ❖ Areas of opportunity
- ❖ Personality

5.5.1.1 Feelings

The PSTs focused on describing positive and negative feelings that came to light during their teaching practice. Some of the comments they expressed illustrated happiness and confidence gained. Sofía, for example, mentioned how happy she was when she ‘noticed that students enjoyed playing games’ (JPh1/Sofía01/II12). This showed that she based her feelings on the students’ reactions to an activity. Alternatively, some PSTs mentioned that their happiness was due to their own performance; Zoé (JPh1/04/II32) stated that she ‘really feel[s] proud and happy to see progress’. The majority of the time, the PSTs did not provide further details about the evolution in their teaching practice. Positive feelings were interconnected to confidence gained as they learned more about their students. In this regard, Perla described that:

I am feeling more confident when teaching to these students. I already know how they are and the way they behave. Also I know some of their strengths and weaknesses.

(JPh1/Perla06/II1–3)

It seemed that the growing familiarity with students dispelled lack of experience and lack of knowledge about teaching at this stage of their teaching practice. Moreover, noticing students learning and their interest in the lesson also increased the PSTs confidence about their classes. For instance, Sunny declared that he managed to control the class as time went by 'and that fact is helping me build a better confidence and not to be afraid of teaching them' (JPh1/Sunny04/II2–3). Interestingly, some PSTs reported that their self-assurance increased when they improved their practice, while others indicated that as they felt more confident they were able to pay attention to more aspects of their teaching and improve it. The progress they reported was on various aspects of their teaching. Laura, for example, talked about her evolution in terms of monitoring the class. She learned that standing in one place in the classroom was not adequate and she started supervising the class, 'therefore, I believe I have improved that aspect' (JPh1/Laura03/II15). Laura was (apparently) constantly reflecting upon the things that she needed to improve in her practice; however, her reflections in her subsequent journal entries were very descriptive, without providing more insights on the topic of concern (e.g. 'I am really happy about what I have learned and achieved this semester' (JPh1/Laura09/II5)). Most of the times, the feeling of accomplishment was linked to classroom management. For instance, Luna highlighted that:

[...] I think I showed authority and I got a quick response from the students and this made me feel proud of myself.

(JPh1/Luna05/II24–28)

In previous entries, Luna had expressed her distress for not being firm and not being able to control the students the way her peers used to do. She said that her sense of accomplishment increased when she managed to make use of her voice

as a support to achieve class control. In a later entry, she expressed that she felt proud because:

[...] I felt I was able to use my authority to encourage the students but without losing the friendly atmosphere and the touch of fun of the activity.

(JPh1/Luna08/II23–25)

Luna constantly looked for a balance to be able to manage the class by being firm with students, but also by creating a good class environment. Apparently, developing her identity as a teacher (being friendly and firm at the same time) was necessary for her. The constant emphasis on being ‘an authority’ might be because most of the PSTs were young novice teachers who usually thought their juvenile appearance might have caused students’ disrespect. This could also be because the PSTs did not see themselves as teachers but as students doing their teaching practice with groups that were not their own (Miller 2009) (see 5.5.1.2).

Generally speaking, the PSTs’ negative feelings were more related to the nervousness about it being the first class, and feeling sad or angry at some situations in the classroom. Frida, for example, reported a mixture of feelings during her first time teaching experience. She said that:

During the week, I experienced many different feelings from happiness and relieve to anger and sadness. However, I knew that it had to happen because it is the first time I give classes to high school guys.

(JPh1/Frida01/II6–8)

Apparently, the expectations of the first week of teaching practice triggered those feelings. The fact that it was the PSTs’ first experience, that they did not know the students, and did not know how the classes would develop, could have been the reason the PSTs felt uneasy. During the PSTs’ teaching practice there were other commentaries expressing negative feelings due to various reasons. One such case

was Sofía, who expressed that she felt disillusioned because she 'had planned the lessons thinking on motivating them [the students] and they did not appreciate it' (JPh1/Sofía03/II17–18). Students' lack of response to the class triggered these kinds of disheartening feelings; however, there were also some situations that the PSTs attributed to themselves as the cause of their disappointment. Alcatraz shared her impression:

I was very disappointed because my voice was low again and I have noticed that the voice is very important because with it you can catch the students' attention or you can also bore them.

(JPh1/Alcatraz03/II1–3)

Apparently, having a negative feeling provoked the PSTs' need to evaluate their performance and notice aspects of the teaching practice that were important to consider. Alcatraz was the only participant in this phase to portray possible consequences of her performance (not catching students' attention due to her low voice).

5.5.1.2 Role and responsibility

It seemed that having a first teaching experience made the PSTs realise that being a teacher is not an easy job, as they conveyed in their journals. Due to this, there were a few comments on their role and the responsibility this career entails.

Marguerita wrote that:

Being a teacher is one of the best works that a person can do but at the same time it has lots of responsibilities. A teacher plays a role of a mentor so he/she becomes an example for students and also a teacher has the responsibility of what he/she will teach to the students.

(JPh1/Marguerita02/II1–4)

Apparently, Marguerita was becoming aware of the importance of learning to be a teacher and her role in a class. Although she did not state it, being aware of her

role might have helped her define her own identity and role in her personal teaching style. The magnitude of the profession was also underscored by Sunny who was aware that being a teacher implies a permanent process of learning:

It is said that to be a teacher is only about standing in front of a group talking and talking. However this wonderful profession implies more than that. This great experience, I am sure, will help me grow up professionally and beware that teachers never stop learning.

(JPh1/Sunny09/II14–17)

Some comments related to the PSTs' identity as teachers emerged in their journals; however, they maintained vague descriptions. Pinky, for instance, stated that her students did not respect her 'due to the fact that the [head] teacher did not introduce us as English teachers' (JPh1/Pinky03/II14–15). It seemed that being recognised by the students not as visitors but as persons who were there to teach during the term was important and necessary to succeed.

5.5.1.3 Awareness of own mistakes

During the process of reflecting upon various aspects of their teaching, the PSTs focused on some mistakes they made, especially in terms of the use of the English language. For example, Laura's concern about her making mistakes was recurrent and evident in most entries. She described that:

When making mistakes with pronunciation or use of tenses, I always tried to correct myself. That is something I really need to keep working on.

(JPh1/Laura03/II10–11)

It seemed that Laura was committed to improving her oral and written production in English, even though she did not indicate how. Making mistakes was a real dilemma for most PSTs'. For instance, Lilo indicated that:

I made three mistakes. The first was that I mispronounced some

words. The second was the way I formulated some questions (grammatical mistakes) and the third was the meaning of the verb bore. I think that it happened because I did not have much time to practice beforehand the information I had to present.

(JPh1/Lilo05/II6–10)

Clearly, Lilo attributed the problems with her pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary to her lack of preparation. Like Lilo, most PSTs described mistakes, without providing explanation of why they thought the mistakes were or how they planned to improve. One aspect of the PSTs' comments that is noteworthy is that most of them were aware of those mistakes and areas of opportunity; nevertheless, only a few described the consequences of making mistakes and manifested their willingness to improve their practice.

5.5.2 Lesson

The second most frequent theme that emerged from the PSTs' journals in the first phase of the study was related to the lesson. The main foci were:

- ❖ The lesson plan
- ❖ Content

5.5.2.1 The lesson plan

Important areas that the PSTs noted about the lesson plan included the benefits of having a lesson plan, the aspects they considered in order to think of future planning, and changes they had to consider in their lesson. Regarding the advantages of having a plan, the comments were more about what the PSTs gained by writing down a plan and the need of having a backup plan for a class. See, for instance, Mario's comment:

One of the benefits that doing your lesson plan has is that you learn [...]. I could say that before I teach my lesson I need to check the

vocabulary that I do not know because it is easier for me to understand the topic and also because if students ask in the class, I have checked it before.

(JPh1/Mario08/II4–7)

Evidently, Mario thought that writing a lesson plan beforehand was helpful since it served as a guide and enabled him to be aware of the topic to be taught, to foresee possible questions from the students, and to be prepared to answers those questions accurately. Mario's comment showed his concern as a novice teacher to be well prepared for the class. Data from the journals showed that most of the PSTs were aware that the activities planned do not necessarily flow the way they were designed. For example, Marguerita (JPh1/02/II20–21) stated that she had learned that 'even though you have a lesson plan it would not necessarily be carried out in the way that was planned'. In the same vein, Perla admitted that 'it is important to have a plan B because we won't have a perfect class always' (JPh1/Perla09/II11–13). Marguerita's and Perla's quotes revealed that they were aware that they had to be prepared in order to solve unexpected situations. In general, the PSTs noticed the importance of having a backup plan, and changing or adapting the lesson plan 'according to students' needs' (JPh1/Lea02/II8) or 'as a result of time, lack of understanding [of the content] or lack of clarity in teacher's explanation' (JPh1/Marguerita04/II6–7). It was clear that the PSTs were concerned about variables that can shape a class. The aspects identified by the PSTs as affecting the lesson and causing changes were the level of English of the students, and the lack of time to carry out some activities. These seemed to be real world difficulties and unforeseen circumstances they dealt with during their teaching practices. When referring to the level, for instance, Valery declared that she modified her lesson when noticed that her students had some difficulties learning a topic due to their low level of English: 'the classes were less stressful and more successful' after that (JPh1/Valery01-04/II6). The low level in L1 was also

addressed by some PSTs as a determining factor for making changes in the lesson plan. For instance, Lea found out that her young children did not know some numbers in Spanish. Lea decided to make some adjustments in the moment of the class, as she explained:

The day of the class, I felt a bit confused because I realized that not all the students knew the numbers [in Spanish]. I had to think quickly in a solution and I decided to focus the class only on four numbers (1, 2, 3 and 4).

(JPh1/Lea02/II4–7)

This was a clear example of the PSTs describing reflection-*in*-action and immediate decision-making to solve an unexpected problem. Another aspect that caused changes in the PSTs' lesson plans was the lack of time to carry out some activities. María, for instance, described how she had to make some changes to her lesson plan 'because of the time that the students were taking to do the activity' (JPh1/María05/II5–6). The realisation of adjusting the time for activities was usually expressed in terms of the students' time to process or learn a topic. Mario mentioned that:

[...] it took a long time to explain the topic. But in the end, I realized that the topic is like that. Students need to take more time learning simple past.

(JPh1/Mario03/II15–16)

Mario tried to balance the situation and make a decision based on what was the best for the students. Mario confirmed his position in his following entry when he reflected that:

[...] We are learning. I know that if the topic that we planned couldn't be finished it doesn't matter we have to teach it in the next section.

(JPh1/Mario04/II12–14)

Mario was not only aware of his students learning but also the process of learning that he was going through as a novice teacher, in terms of time management and his flexibility in adapting the content of the lesson according to students' needs. Mario introduced a concern that seemed to be shared by some other PSTs. That is, planning ahead based on the development of the class or students' preference of activities. Most PSTs proclaimed that they were frequently observing and analysing students' likes and characteristics, and what worked in order to plan their lessons. Moreover, asking the homeroom teachers about students' background knowledge in the first language (when teaching young children) was useful when planning the lessons, as Kimberly recalled:

I had spoken to the teacher in charge of the group and she told me that the children had already learned this topic in Spanish. So for my lesson plan I decided to combine this topic [vegetables] with colors (a topic I had already taught to them).

(JPh1/Kimberly05/II3–6)

Asking experienced teachers, or the ones who are familiar with students, showed the PSTs' genuine interest in improving their teaching practices and making the learning more meaningful by having a lesson plan that considered what students liked and needed.

5.5.2.2 Content and sequence of lesson

The PSTs showed a strong interest in describing the content and sequence of their lessons. For instance, Mario wrote:

I taught places in the country or in a city. [...] Then I showed some images in the projector so that students could identify and learn which kind of places they have in their city, for example, hospitals [...].

(JPh1/Mario01/II7–11)

Mario, as most of the PSTs, focused on providing a plain report of what they did and the topics taught in a class. However, there were a few examples of description of the class and the inclusion of some details. For instance, see Sofía's and Joseline's accounts of what they taught and the order of their classes:

The second class was focused on practicing the simple present and the use of the adverbs of time. First, I [...] Then, I [...] I asked some volunteers to come to the front and write their answers but nobody wanted to do it. So, I chose some of them by means of the list.

(JPh1/Sofía06/II11–16)

This is the fourth class; the topic was the present continuous. I start with the class. First I do the warm up, I make some examples in Spanish so the students can realize the topic for that class. After that, I use some flashcards. All the students were involved in the activity.

(JPh1/Joseline04/II1–4)

Both Sofía and Joseline focused on the teaching of grammar and, apparently, they thought that it was necessary to indicate the sequence of the class in their reflections, even though it was stated in the programme of the *Teaching Practice* course that they should avoid describing the lesson. However, it was also evident that they included details, such as noticing students' engagement (Joseline) or making decisions, when they observed that the students did not volunteer to participate (Sofía). Apparently, in some cases, the description of the sequence of the class was only an excuse to add information about decisions or observations they made.

5.5.3 Classroom management

The main topics that emerged from the first phase in terms of classroom management were:

- ❖ Discipline
- ❖ Giving instructions

- ❖ Special situations
- ❖ The timetable

5.5.3.1 Discipline

Discipline in the classroom was the main concern (regarding class control) in the PSTs' journals. Interestingly, when addressing this, there was a particular focus on looking for possible solutions to control the class. The solutions articulated in the journals are related to the activities and materials they resorted to for controlling the class and issues such as sitting arrangement, monitoring the class, establishing rules, getting help from homeroom teachers, and using rewards and punishments. It seemed the PSTs were constantly looking for adequate activities since those were considered a good resource to discipline children. For instance, Kimberly mentioned in the FG that:

[...] at the beginning it was very difficult to me to control them and they didn't pay attention to me, or anything, so I got desperate and I focused more on finding activities in which they feel interested in, stop talking, pay attention to me, and learn.

(FG/Kimberly/T97)

This clearly indicates that students' demeanour was one of reason to make the decision on the kind of activity to be included in the lesson. In order to control the class, the PSTs also relied on the use of materials, usually in the form of a toy created by them. For instance, Pedro mentioned the use of 'a thermometer' that 'increased the temperature' when students started misbehaving and this meant that the students 'would not get a star at the end of the class' (JPh1/Pedro01-09/II16–19). It seemed that the control of the class was determined by the fact that the children received a prize when the class finished. Pedro was not the only PST using material as a tool to control students. MJ and Sunny (who used to teach the same group) also referred to this in their journals. MJ, for instance, wrote that she

'made fake cameras and told the kids that Santa Claus had sent them to watch over them. They chew it up all and believe me!' (JPh1/MJ07/II2–3). In this comment, her excitement for the success of the material is evident. Sunny added that 'If they didn't do them they wouldn't receive anything in Christmas' (JPh1/Sunny07/II6–7); that is, they apparently established a punishment and reward system to maintain control. Sunny continued to say that 'this strategy worked very well, at least today, and I hope it continues for the rest of the classes' (JPh1/Sunny07/II7–8). In this statement, it was clear that Sunny was aware of possible changes in the effect the material had on the children. Later, MJ and Sunny realised and reported that the novelty factor of a strategy or material can diminish as time goes by or when overused. However, the use of rewards and punishment to control the class seemed to be a frequent tactic. According to some PSTs' comments, the reward strategy helped them maintain discipline; however, when the offering of a prize did not work as expected, they had to resort to some kind of punishment.

There was also evidence that when the PSTs felt that they were not able to control the class, they received help from the homeroom teachers or the Director of the school. A striking example of receiving help from the director was described by Sunny when he faced a discipline problem with one child who refused to participate and behave:

I told him that if he did not do what I was asking him to do, I was going to punish him; he said nothing and went on misbehaving. [...] Therefore, we decided to take him to the director. [...] At first we did not want to send him to the director because we knew that it is our responsibility to control his behaviour since we are the persons in charge of the group. However we could not handle the situation; we felt like running out of resources. I felt frustrated for not being capable to handle the situation.

(JPh1/Sunny08/II4–16)

Sunny included interesting points in his remarks, showing a mix of decision-making and emotional response: his attempts to control the situation, which demonstrated his level of liability as the teacher in charge; and his feeling of frustrations when he was not able to control the child and had no option but to send him to the director, which was a negative feeling that could have affected his motivation as a novice teacher.

5.5.3.2 Giving instructions

In terms of the management of the class, the PSTs identified that it was necessary to make instructions clear so that the activities would be completed successfully. They tried to ensure this by using their voice, asking someone to repeat or explain the instructions, and even using the students' L1. Laura, for instance, described that:

In today's class, the students did not pay enough attention when I was giving the instructions so they weren't sure about what to do. What I try to do [...] once I finish giving instructions, I ask a random student what they have to do in order to be sure that they all understand what I say.

(JPh1/Laura07/II8–11)

Laura realising of the instructions not being clear and changing the strategy to confirm her students' understanding demonstrated that the PSTs were reflecting-*in*-action (as they had reported in the questionnaire) and making decisions in order to help students and improve their practice. Most of the time, the PSTs reported that the decision to repeat the information or use of a louder voice was based on students' misbehaviour or noise production. However, in some cases the problem was attributed to themselves as teachers. Alcatraz referred to this when she said that:

[...] I was not very clear and the student did not understand **me** so

they were doing other things. In order to solve this problem, I gave them an example of what they were supposed to.

(JPh1/Alcatraz07/II4–7, emphasis by researcher)

In her comment, she demonstrated that she came up with a solution as soon as she realised (reflection-*in-action*) her lack of clarity. On this occasion the answer was to provide them with a model of what to do. In some other cases, the strategy to make instructions clear was using students' L1, as illustrated by Perla:

First of all, I tried to explain as better as possible the instructions, but the students didn't understand very well. Most of the time I used Spanish [...] but I think I should have used more English.

(JPh1/Perla01/II7–10)

Perla was aware that, even though she found the use of Spanish valuable, she was teaching an English class and that English was the language she needed to use. Perla's awareness of this was also palpable in a later entry in which she explained that she was 'more conscious of speaking not only in Spanish' (JPh1/Perla03/II3). It seemed that the use of Spanish was a dilemma for the PSTs who, in general, stated that they avoided students' L1 but used it when giving instructions. PSTs quotations on this matter showed that they were looking for a balance in the use of L1 and L2 to help students understand the instructions.

5.5.3.3 *Special situations and special students*

For some PSTs, it seemed to be important to describe unexpected situations in their journals in terms of classroom management. Most of the commentaries were about children with 'special' characteristics. An example for the latter was reported by Lea who said:

I did not take into account that not all students are in the same situation; for example, there are two children that have special problems and they should be treated in an especial way, but in this first class I did not know it and it was really difficult to deal with them.

At the end of the class, I talked to the teacher of the kids and she gave me some ideas to deal with them.

(JPh1/Lea01/II8–12)

Lea did not indicate what the special characteristics of the children were (not even in later entries). However, it was evident her preoccupation with knowing how to manage these children that she decided to talk to an experienced teacher in order to learn what to do. Dealing with children who showed discipline problems increased the PSTs' awareness to pay more attention to possible solutions to teach and control the children. Pinky, for example, referred to a problem with one boy who misbehaved and 'has problems and he likes attention; he cries for nonsense things' (JPh1/Pinky05/II7). Due to that situation, Pinky and her peer tried to find a balance in helping the student when they 'decided to be aware of the problem and be close to him [...]; but when he started crying we decided not to give him attention if is not required, and it seems to work' (JPh1/Pinky05/II8–10). This problematic situation tended to loom very large in her later entries; for instance, almost at the end of her teaching practice she kept writing about it, as shown in this extract:

This kid is notable that he has a lot of problems. [...] We try to involve him in the group [...]. Since he has not been participative and he was always crying, we told the [homeroom] teacher and she said that she would talk to him about it.

(JPh1/Pinky08/II8–19)

In this quotation, Pinky showed evidence of the constant worry the situation represented to her, but also confirmed her commitment to learn how to deal with a special situation by trialling some strategies and even talking to the homeroom teacher. Apparently, not every PST looked for help or used conventional strategies to control the group or a situation. MJ described an extreme solution (as last resource) she came up with in order to keep the discipline in the classroom:

[X] does not stay in his place so I warned him about he standing up again; he didn't even care so I had to do what I told him I would do: I tied him to the chair with toilet paper.

(JPh1/MJ08/II4–6)

Noticeably, MJ was not able to control the child and the only solution she found (on the spot) was not one that many teachers might use. She did not provide more details about the situation but it did show the extreme response that may appear to be necessary in the heat of controlling the class (Reflection-*in-action*) at this stage of the training.

5.6 Wrapping-up Chapter Five

At the beginning of this chapter, I stated that the first phase of the study intended to explore and identify the process that the PSTs followed in order to reflect, as well as the level of reflection shown in their journals entry. The outcomes from the questionnaire, the FG, and the journals helped me answer RQs 1 and 2, and helped me decide on the best way to nurture reflection in the next phase. This last section of chapter five summarises the main findings in the exploratory stage and highlights some issues that were important for the design of the intervention phase.

5.6.1 Process of reflection

Data from the questionnaires and the FG showed that the PSTs perceived reflection as the opportunity to interact and converse with their peers about their teaching experiences, and that some of the content of the journals (individual reflection) drew on collaborative peer talk. This was valuable information since it was evident that the PSTs preferred having someone else collaborating with them, which they expressed on many occasions. The PSTs said that they should reflect individually in order to take advantage of the benefits of introspection and self-evaluation, but collaborative reflection was emphasized as an opportunity for them

to learn through exchange of experiences with their peers. This is in agreement with Zepke's (2003:170) definition of collaborative reflection as 'a process to help us learn from our own or other's experiences [...]'.

Researchers (e.g. Copland, Ma, and Mann 2009; Loughran 2002; Osterman 1990; Dewey 1933) have stated that reflection should be a conscious and systematic process in order to take carefully and critically into consideration their actions, beliefs, and knowledge. However, data in the exploratory phase presented mainly descriptive situations; that is, apparently the PSTs were not aware of this wider definition of reflection and maintained a vague description of their teaching experience. This can be understood since they were just initiating the process of reflection and had not yet received any type of assistance or explanation about the practice up until this point of the study, and they lacked a structured approach to the process of reflection, 'which might not enable PSTs to change from a superficial level to a critical one' (Kwan and Simpson 2010). The PSTs reported in the questionnaire and the FG that they used to reflect before, during, and after their teaching practice. Data from the journals confirmed that they used to reflect during (reflection-in-action) and after (reflection-on-action) the lesson. It was also evident that some of them used reflection-for-action (Killian and Todnem 1991). Generally speaking, most of them pointed out that they were systematic in terms of when to reflect and what to write about; however, some PSTs indicated that they used to write their reflections as ideas came up, trying (but not guaranteeing) to follow the sequence of the class. Some of them usually followed a guideline provided by the mentor teacher. Others based their reflections on what worked, what did not work, and possible solutions.

Learning about the PSTs' habits of reflection helped me decide on my approach for the intervention phase. For instance, I learned that they were writing individual

journals, but they preferred collaborative reflection. So I decided to take advantage of the writing they were doing but including a type of collaboration through the use of DJs. Constant interaction and feedback was prioritised since the PSTs had expressed in the FG that they needed more guidance during their teaching practice and their journal writing. Considering that they reported having talked to someone about their teaching, I thought of having sessions to reflect with someone else (critical friends). In this case, I decided to have some GR sessions in which they would talk to their peers in a more systematic way (see Methodology chapter for details of DJs and GRs sessions). Both the DJs and the GRs would be first tools to foster reflection.

It was important for me, as a researcher, to learn about what the PSTs thought were some barriers of RP. As expected, time was the main constraint mentioned. Therefore, I had to plan my next steps according to this demand. The restrictions on time determined the number of journals and meetings for the intervention phase (as explained in the methodology chapter). Regarding the tools, the PSTs reported in the questionnaire that they knew about the journal/diary, videos, reflection sheets, and digital diaries. However, it was evident during the exploratory phase that they only used the journal as a tool, which was a requirement for the *Teaching practice* subject. Writing on a daily basis was apparently not considered a good suggestion, though. Concerning the strategies, the PSTs mentioned in the questionnaire the ones they thought would be useful to trigger reflection (see Table 8 in 5.1). However, data from the journals and the FG showed that the strategies they used were only: talking to a partner, friend or teacher; writing down notes; and observing others. Learning this information confirmed for me that it was necessary to introduce more strategies to activate reflection in the intervention. As I mentioned in section 5.2, sharing reflection with someone who is empathic with

them was important for the PSTs. Hence, I decided to adopt a non-threatening approach to create a positive environment. My purpose was to make them feel that I was there as a friendly support, even though I constantly challenged them to think more, to reflect on what they were doing, and to be critical enough to pursue improvement in their level of reflection and their teaching practice.

5.6.2 Level of reflection

Some researchers state that the levels of reflection are interconnected to what the PSTs reflect upon and the process of enquiry (e.g. Ward and McCotter 2004). Being influenced by this idea, and using a guide suggested by some researchers in which I concentrated on their description of four levels of reflection (see Table 4 in 3.2.6), I analysed the way the PSTs developed their thoughts and the aspects that they reflected on in the journals and during their seminars with their mentor teachers. The journals were the main source of data (due to the number of entries gathered), rather than their self-reporting in the questionnaires.

According to the focus and the process of enquiry described in the guide, the PSTs had a complete first level (Non-reflective) and a partial second level of reflection (Descriptive/Technical). Most of the time (as illustrated throughout section 5.5) the PSTs tended to present descriptive comments; that is, they lacked an element of enquiry. They did not question themselves about personal decisions; what is more, their analysis of the class, the teacher, and the students was generalised. All this situated them in the first level of reflection, which represents a Non-reflective level (Hatton and Smith 1995). However, taking into account that some of the PSTs sometimes asked themselves about students reactions to activities or specific situations faced (mainly questions implied by frustrations, unexpected or exciting results), then it can be said that they fulfilled some of the requirements of the

Descriptive or Technical level (Hatton and Smith 1995; Jay and Johnson 2002; Ward and McCotter 2004), which is the second level of reflection. According to Ward and McCotter (2004:250), in this level the PST stops asking questions after initial identification of a problem. This means that there is no further analysis of why things happen, a common tendency in PSTs' journals in this first phase of the study. Having in consideration that the second level also indicates that the PSTs start distinguishing specific features, causes, and consequences (Jay and Johnson 2002:77), then the PSTs did not totally accomplish the second level, as only a few participants proved that they were analysing possible causes to certain situations but were not analysing possible consequences. That being said, the PSTs had the first level of reflection completed, but they accomplished only some of the requirements for the second level and one of the elements of the third level (learning or exchanging experience with peers).

The low level of reflection was also evident during the observations I did of the seminars. I was able to observe that only two or three PSTs used to participate actively and showed some kind of engagement with the topics discussed, as described in a summary of my observations in Appendix 1. Most of them usually reproduced what they had read and were unable to describe their stance on the themes being analysed. This conclusion was exemplified in my RJ:

It was interesting to notice that, either as a team or as a whole group discussion, students only worried about reporting what they had just read, without giving any critical opinion about the topic. Even when the teacher asked them specifically for their opinion, this was very superficial and they only repeated some lines of the article or the chapter read, [...]. Only at the end of the activity two students showed some interest in linking the topics to what they had experienced as students of a foreign language.

(RJ/7-08-13/II9–19)

These types of 'discussions' were characteristic of the PSTs during the seminars, despite the mentor teachers' repeated attempts to ask questions to elicit reflection;

although sometimes the questions asked were yes/no questions, with no possibility of providing extended responses (see details in Appendix 1). This made me realise that the types of questions asked are important in fostering reflection; that is, asking constantly open-ended questions works better than asking yes/no questions.

Up to this point, I had sufficient information to take into consideration for the second phase in terms of the level I needed to promote. Clearly, the PSTs had accomplished the first level of reflection. However, most of them had only a partial second level. It was important for me to help them achieve this level, mainly because at this point of my study, I started to think that one of my goals for the intervention would be helping the PSTs to improve their level of reflection. I was aware that the PSTs had a low level of reflection and that it was useful for them to use guiding questions, so that they knew on what to focus the analysis of their practice.

5.6.3 Resulting plan

Based on the results of the exploratory phase, I decided to start my intervention phase with the promotion of the second level. The first tools to be explored with the PSTs were the DJ and the GR sessions. For the first cycle in the intervention, I decided to strengthen the strategies that they were already using: sharing and stimulating reflection with someone else, observing other teachers. I also included triggering questions for them to provide more details about their practicum. Since I was not able to conduct a workshop (as I had initially planned) to introduce strategies for reflection, I included some in the form of comments or reflective questions, both in the DJs and in the GRs. Furthermore, four values were

emphasised in order to engage PSTs and motivate RP: dialogic and collaborative reflection (in a more systematic way), enquiry, and a non-threatening atmosphere.

- ◆ **Dialogic reflection:** This aimed to promote conversation between the PSTs and the researcher and to provide the PSTs with the opportunity to see how the journals could be used differently to the way they were accustomed (from the first phase). This, ideally, would be more dynamic and interesting. As for the GRs, since the PSTs had reported in the FG that they liked talking to others about their practice as novice teachers, they would be able to verbalise their teaching experiences, share their reflections and receive a response to their verbalisations. Dialogic reflection is interrelated to the next value.
- ◆ **Collaborative reflection:** Given that the PSTs had reported in the FG and the initial questionnaire that they preferred and found very useful sharing their reflection with others, I considered it important to maintain collaborative reflection during the intervention. This way, the PSTs had the opportunity to help each other, as well as give and obtain helpful feedback. Hence, the aim of both the DJs and the GRs was to encourage this.
- ◆ **Enquiry:** The main purpose was to make the PSTs offer more than 'yes' or 'no' answers, or mere descriptions (as they had done in the exploratory phase). As I previously mentioned in 5.6.2, during the seminars I realised that the type of questions the teachers (usually) ask are very important in order to trigger reflection. Therefore, I constantly asked them questions such as: Why do you think so? Why did you make that decision? What were the consequences? What would you have done instead? among others. This was also in line with the guide to promote reflection (see Table 4 in 3.2.6), which includes some guiding questions to encourage higher levels of reflection. This approach is connected to the dialogue I promoted and the collaboration as it also sought to

create (either a written or an oral) dialogue or interaction between the researcher and the PSTs and among all the participants and the researcher.

- ♦ **Non-threatening atmosphere:** In order to gain the PSTs' trust and to motivate them to see reflection as a valid, useful, and enjoyable way of sharing concerns and teaching experience, I decided upon a friendly environment. I believe that students (in this case the PSTs) are easily invited to participate and articulate their personal reflections when they are in a friendly and kind environment even though they are being challenged. Furthermore, my idea was to make them feel that they were in an empathetic atmosphere. In order to achieve this, I included positive, encouraging, and sympathetic comments, as well as an informal tone during the intervention, either for the written and the oral reflections.

Chapter Six: Intervention phase findings

This chapter aims to analyse the outcomes of the intervention phase of the study, which included the use of reflective tools and strategies, as well as the promotion of dialogic and collaborative reflection, an enquiry approach, and a non-threatening environment as inherent values to engage PSTs in RP. Following RQs 1 and 2 in the exploratory phase, the RQ addressed in this phase was:

◆ **RQ3:** What are the effects of the intervention on the PSTs reflections?

As previously stated, RQ3 investigates the effects of the intervention in terms of (see section 1.3 for more details):

- ❖ Focus of reflection
- ❖ Process of reflection
- ❖ Level of reflection
- ❖ Effects of values promoted
- ❖ Tools and strategies

In order to respond RQ3, I analysed five cycles of reflection, which included a DJ and a GR per cycle, as well as entries in the FB group. Each cycle is organised and presented in this chapter as follows:

1. **Introduction:** Consists of a brief explanation of what was planned to do, based on the outcomes of the previous cycle.
2. **Findings:** Includes the analysis of the main findings, organised by theme.
3. **Summary of findings:** Incorporates a summary of main findings, which led to the generation of a new plan for the following cycle.

My main goal in this analysis is to show the PSTs' focus of reflection, the way they described their experiences, and inspect how reflection developed in each cycle. It might be worth stating that the articulations of reflection in this chapter are derived from a socio-cultural interaction between the researcher and the participants, and represent conscious reflections produced in response to specific enquiries or guidance from the researcher (see Ross 2011). The data is not presented as a transparent window to novice teachers' internal processes. The data is always treated as a co-construction that arises out of the training context with its various goals and orientations. Similar to the exploratory phase, I categorised the PSTs' focus of reflection into themes resulting from the coding process (explained in 4.5.2.1 and exemplified in Appendix 6). Due to space constraints, I concentrated on the themes that the PSTs focused more in each cycle. The sequence in which the themes are presented in this chapter is according to the frequency the PSTs mentioned them in each cycle, based on the NVivo count (see Appendix 8 for details). In chapter seven, I include a summary and discussion of the findings.

6.1 Cycle One (C1)

In the exploratory phase of the study, there was evidence (presented throughout Chapter 5 and summarised in 5.6.2) of the PSTs having a partial second level of reflection (Descriptive/Technical); that is, most of them basically described classroom situations (e.g. students misbehaving), but there was no evidence of reflecting on what caused events nor the consequences for the students or the PSTs' development. Therefore, I began the C1 of the intervention phase by encouraging the PSTs reflection on possible reasons for events they faced and possible effects. Because the PSTs had not started their teaching practice of the second term of practicum, the questions included were related to their experience in the previous term (See Appendix 3, Tables 1 and 2 for guiding questions). As a

complementary activity, I created a FB group for the PSTs to post their concerns about their teaching practice (see Appendix 9 for entries examples).

6.1.1 Findings

For C1, the PSTs did a good job by answering the questions asked in both the DJ and the GR. However, most of them repeated information that they had included in their reflections in the exploratory phase, perhaps an expected outcome because they were asked to write about their experiences during the past term. Therefore, their focus of reflection in the C1 coincided with the ones in the previous phase; that is, they wrote and talked about their feelings and their role as teachers, classroom management, the lesson, the students, and materials and activities. An aspect that emerged in this first cycle, which had not previously come to light, was related to the context (schools) in which the PSTs taught in the previous term. Figure 11 shows a summary of the themes in C1:

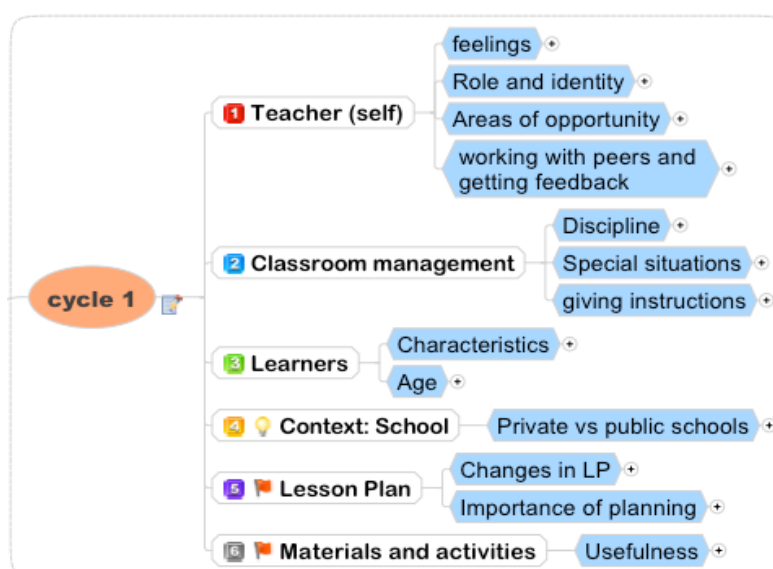


Figure 11: Themes C1

6.1.1.1 Teacher (Self)

Similar to their reflections in the exploratory phase, almost all the PSTs started their journals by describing not only how they felt when they began their teaching

practice, but also how that (generally negative) feeling changed over time. For instance, Lea expressed in the GR that:

[...] I was a bit shocked the moment I went inside the classroom and saw that there were 30 children, 3 to 4 years old. [...] it was just too stressful at the beginning.

(GR1/Lea/T28)

The fact that Lea had to work with a large group of very young children produced a strong feeling in her, probably because she did not feel prepared to control the students as she was just starting her teaching practice. In R2 of the DJ, I asked Lea how she was feeling at the moment and if she thought that she would feel nervous with the new group. Lea's reply confirmed that she, like most PSTs, realised that the experience gained in the previous term was very useful to feel more confident and to gain determination to go beyond the tension and anxiety she felt at the beginning of her practice:

Now, I don't feel scare of being in front of a large group. [...] my first experience was full of challenges; however, all of that helped to be more secure and deal with any kind of situation.

(JC1/Lea/R2/II16–21)

In C1, the PSTs were mainly descriptive in the manner they approached their concerns. However, compared to the exploratory phase, the descriptions in C1 included more details explaining why some of the events in their classrooms were occurring. This tendency could be observed too in another recurrent idea during C1: their role and identity as teachers. As Burns and Richards (2009:5) suggest, 'Teacher learning involves not only discovering more about the skills and knowledge of language teaching but also what it means to be a language teacher'. It is worth stating that all of them were teaching in different schools where they were given permission to teach one or two hours a week in a 'borrowed' group. That is, they were not the head English teachers. This topic also came up in the

exploratory phase of the study; however, in that phase they only mentioned that their students did not see them as the 'authority in the classroom' (JPh1/Sunny06/II15). In C1, the PSTs were able to express themselves more about this topic by adding details and explanations. Chicharito, for example, described during the GR a situation of his students being late and out of control during the class. Chicharito tried to find an explanation of his students' misbehaviour and lack of participation by providing a possible reason: he was not the 'real teacher of the subject' (GR1/Chicharito/T43). Later in the GR, he mentioned the topic again showing that being an authority in the classroom was important for him. He talked about the homeroom teacher with whom he was working, who in his view did not have an authoritative role. He said that:

She doesn't try to be an authority [...]. And I said [to myself]: "No, I'm not going to do my class like the teacher is doing it." So, I tried to have a more dynamic class but also to be stricter [...].

(GR1/Chicharito/T158)

It was interesting to see that Chicharito was reflecting not only on himself but also comparing his experience with the role of the teacher he was observing. Chicharito's observation made him think and make a decision about his role as an English teacher ('stricter'). This is in agreement with Gebhard (2009:253) who states that 'The process of observing other teachers is much the same as self-observation' and that when observing other (experienced or not) teachers, student teachers can 'construct and reconstruct, and revise (their) own teaching' (Gebhard 2009, citing Fanselow 1988:116).

Identity issues due to being young teachers were common concerns among the PSTs, mainly when they had to teach students close to the same age. August, for instance, made this point when he explained that his students 'are about my age; some of them cannot simply take the teacher seriously if he/she looks like them'

(JC1/August/R1/II57–58). To this comment, I asked him in the DJ to what he attributed that belief. His response was that:

It could be cultural. Ever since I was in secondary, my partners and I had the idea that if the teacher is young, he/she might be unprepared, like we say in Spanish: “los alumnos se comen al maestro” [‘the students “swallow” the teacher’, meaning that the students overrun teacher’s authority and take control over the classroom].

(JC1/August/R2/II60–64)

August based his comment on his personal belief for years as a student (Miller 2009). According to Borg (2009:164 citing Lortie’s (1975) notion of ‘Apprenticeship of observation’), ‘prior experiences as learners shape their beliefs about teaching’. What can be assumed is that August, like many of the PSTs participating in the study, thought that the teacher’s age was possibly a variable affecting the perception that students might have had about the teacher in terms of authority. Laura, for instance, mentioned in her DJ and in the GR that she and Luna were teaching a group of students at the university who were the same age as them. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to teach the *English 6* class of the ELM, which meant that the students were actually their schoolmates. Laura said that with this group ‘I had to act like a boss!’ (JC1/Laura/R1/II12). When I asked her in the DJ what she meant by that, she said:

By “acting as a boss” I mean that I had to act as a teacher; I had to play that role for them. It was strange because that role is very different from being their friend or classmate. When we are friends we can make jokes to each other, you know, we can play around. However, having a teacher-student relationship is based on respect to each other. From my part it was like that. I respected them and had to leave the “friends or classmates” thing behind to have a good relationship with everyone.

(JC1/Laura/R2/II1–12)

Being her classmates’ teacher during the practicum made Laura reflect on her role in the classroom and adapt it accordingly. Apparently, as reported in the first GR (GR1/T36–49), working with her classmates was somehow problematic because

the students used to arrive late when she and her peer (Luna) taught the class and did not recognise them as teachers but practitioners. I learned later when I read Laura's R2 of her DJ that the situation with students being late and not seeing her and Luna as their teachers had changed. Laura described in her journal that:

After a few classes they started treating us like their formal teacher. Moreover, it kind of helped us to teach them, as we already knew each one of them: their personalities, their level of English, the topics they already knew and much more.

(JC1/Laura/R2/II20–25)

In this case, Laura saw the opportunity of teaching her 'classmates-students' as an advantage but also as a way to prove herself as a teacher. She mentioned in her journal that 'we were almost obliged to do an excellent performance. Personally, I saw that as a challenge since I had to be aware of my pronunciation and my sentence structure at all times' (JC1/Laura/R1/II15–16). Clearly, having a good performance in front of students who were the same age was essential for them; probably because the PSTs felt that they needed to prove to themselves that they were able to deal with this situation. Evidence of the importance of language development in teacher preparation programmes for EFL settings (e.g. Borg 2006; McDonald and Kasule 2005; Lavender 2002; Berry 1990) have demonstrated that EFL student teachers identify language improvement to be essential to their development. For instance, in a study with EFL undergraduate students of English, Borg (2006) found that Hungarian pre-service EFL teachers are concerned about not making mistakes in English because it is not their L1. According to Kamhi-Stein (2009:92), 'This factor contributes to feeling insecurity'. Furthermore, Murdoch (1999:258) states that 'a teacher's confidence is most dependent on his or her own degree of language competence'. Being aware of their roles and characteristics as teachers was important for the PSTs, who engaged in the issue from different perspectives. For instance, Lea described that:

My conclusion, according to my experience, is that undoubtedly the teacher is a key in the class since it is him/her who will guide the students, and motivate them in every class, as well as catch their attention through a good attitude, interesting activities, and having a good relationship with them.

(JC1/Lea/R1/II39–46)

The description of teachers' characteristics was addressed by most of the PSTs (as in the exploratory phase) in terms of classroom management and teaching techniques. Because I noticed that in the PSTs' DJs there was a tendency to point out teacher's characteristics, I asked them in the FB group more about it. Their responses were basically general descriptions of a good teacher, without providing further details or explanations, as can be observe from Peter's comment:

I believe that what makes a good teacher is the commitment for his or her teaching, responsibility, creativity and, most importantly, love for what he/she does (which is teaching).

(FB/Peter/Entry5)

On the contrary, in the DJs they had the opportunity to reflect on their own qualities as teachers and there was an increasing awareness on paying more attention to their weaknesses and common mistakes. To this, I decided to ask them about what they thought they needed or would like to improve. Hence, they included a set of areas of opportunity in R2 of their DJ. For instance, Luna reflected upon her experience during the first term, especially after dealing with her assertiveness and classroom management. She declared that she would like:

to be able to manage the group and be able to construct better lesson plans which are student-focused. I also hope to build up my confidence and gain a lot of experience to help me in the future [...].

(JC1/Luna/R2/II60–65)

Luna was clearly aware of her areas of opportunity to improve her teaching practice. It was typical of the PSTs to mention a mixture of academic or methodological aspects as well as personal elements they wanted to improve.

Moreover, some PSTs paid attention to their need to learn how to deal with special students. A clear example of this was Lea who said that she was interested in learning more about how to deal with students 'because we can have different kind of students such as autistic or hyperactive etc. and we don't know how to deal with them' (JC1/Lea/R2/II64–67). Compared to the exploratory phase, in C1 the PSTs started focusing on students with mental or physical disabilities (as Lea mentioned) rather than behavioural issues.

In C1 most PSTs talked about working with a peer, learning from him or her, and getting feedback. The topic came up from the very beginning in C1, showing the PSTs awareness of collaborative work. Interestingly, when the PSTs talked about working with a peer, they showed engagement in reflecting upon this, considering the benefits they would obtain from collaborating with a peer. For instance, Luna declared that the thing that she liked the most about her first teaching experience was 'the fact that I had [Laura] to help me not only with the work but also to give me feedback' (JC1/Luna/R1/II11–12). She explained that when she was dealing with controlling the students due to her 'sweetness' and 'lack of assertiveness', she received helpful advice:

I was said I had been too friendly and soft with the students during the first few weeks of practice, but after receiving comments from the [homeroom] teacher and Laura, I put a lot of effort into being more assertive and strict.

(JC1/Luna/R1/II37–40)

When I asked her if she managed to change what Laura recommended, she added in R2 that she did and she tried to 'kept [the advice] in mind the whole entire session and I think that I kept on doing that ever since' (JC1/Luna/R2/II14–16). Evidently, Luna drew on Laura's advice in order to improve her performance as a teacher. In R2, Luna wrote that prior to starting the *Teaching practice* course, she

'hadn't really thought about having a partner to work with and provide feedback and be so helpful' (JC1/Luna/R2/II1–6). August was the only participant who stated that it was fine to work with someone only for this stage of his training. This was due to his preference to work alone and to his awareness that in the future he would be working on his own (JC1/August/R1/II34–35). Up to this point of the study, he only envisioned collaboration as an exchange or discussion of ideas and personal experiences. Later in R2, he acknowledged again that working with a partner was useful and he was able to learn a great deal from him; in spite of this, he insisted on the limitations of working with someone else in the future:

I think teachers discuss about their lessons and classes and performance; and they might give advice one another but I don't think they plan together.

(JC1/August/R2/II45–48)

Clearly, August perceived that the collaboration with his peer was a good support, like all the PSTs participating in the study, but he was also thinking about the type of collaboration he would obtain in the future from a peer.

6.1.1.2 Classroom Management

Controlling group discipline, giving instructions, and dealing with 'special' students were the most common comments that came up in C1 of the intervention phase. It was interesting to observe in this cycle that when the PSTs addressed classroom management issues, they not only described a (discipline) situation but also the use of strategies to manage students as response. A clear example of a discipline problem was described by Lea when her peer asked her in R2 what was the most difficult aspect of teaching children. Lea replied that:

[It] was trying to keep them in silence and make them pay attention all the time. In other words, keeping the discipline in the classroom took me time.

Lea confirmed in the GR that discipline was her biggest concern and she declared that ‘sometimes you leave the classroom feeling bad or frustrated! God! It is difficult to work with small kids!’ (GR1/Lea/T30). Dealing with discipline issues provoked strong feelings in the PSTs from the beginning of their teaching practice. As Hayes (2008:57) states, ‘the process of learning to become a teacher is complex and may be fraught with tensions and anxieties for novice teachers’. Apparently, facing these problems and feelings made the PSTs look for a variety of options to deal with discipline issues. This was representative of the PSTs in C1 who reported the use of strategies as a solution to control their groups. Laura, for instance, described that when some male students ‘were messing around and making jokes’, she had to ‘place them in different seats and that kept them calm for a while’ (JC1/Laura/R1/II84–85). The PSTs were constantly looking for answers to solve discipline problems. This was the case with Peter who concluded that ‘raising my voice, projecting an authoritarian image, and using fun activities are strategies that have helped me a lot when teaching children’ (JC1/Peter/R1/II10–13). Another source that the PSTs used during their practicum to manage the class was to rely on the homeroom teachers’ advice. Lea wrote that:

The teachers in charge of the group helped us when students were a little bit out of control. Also, they gave us advice on which kind of activities could work better and which ones were best not to do.

(JC1/Lea/R1/II18–21)

Having the support of an experienced teacher who guided them to maintain discipline worked well for the PSTs. Moreover, observing those experienced teachers was helpful too (Wallace’s knowledge-by-observation 1991). For example, Lea and her peer, Kimberly, paid attention to what the in-service teacher used to do in order to keep the children controlled. Lea expressed in the GR that:

I think the way I managed the group improved [...]. After observing how they managed the kids, there was a moment in which we stopped needing their help to continue our lessons.

(GR1/Lea/T74)

Evidently, observing an experienced teacher was helpful for her. Additionally, the PSTs made decisions on what strategies to continue using based on their own experience and observation of what worked and what did not work. However, up to this point, there was no evidence of higher level of reflecting on, for example, what the implications were for Lea's own teaching. Taking into consideration that controlling the class was an important concern for the PST, I asked them in the FB group about the most challenging situation they had faced and what decision they made in order to overcome the situation and the reason for that choice. However, they only described what happened and what they did.

Compared to the exploratory phase, it was interesting to observe that when the PSTs addressed classroom management issues, they showed that they started looking for help, observing others, and trialling strategies to evaluate whether or not they worked. However, the PSTs basically provided descriptions of what they did without further reflection on results and consequences, neither positive nor negative.

6.1.1.3 Learners

In this cycle, there was a tendency to describe the students' characteristics, especially regarding behaviour and skills due to age. The basic mode of description that the PSTs used to write about students in C1 was similar to the ones provided during the exploratory phase. For instance, Sunny said that:

I was able to notice that my students were smart, fun, dynamic, mischievous, and somehow obedient [...]. The majority of the kids spoke very well even though they are three and two years old. Those

things really caught my attention because from my previous experience with kids, they are still young to know that stuff.

(JC1/Sunny/R1/II11–18)

Even though Sunny's comment remained descriptive, it is interesting to underline his realisation of students being able to do more than they are usually expected to do at a very young age. However, Sunny did not provide more details on what he based his knowledge about students being 'still young to know that stuff', or the effects in his class due to students' proficiency. Different from Sunny, most of the PSTs focused on negative characteristics. Peter, for example, worried about his students' lack of concentration:

I could not help to notice that the group I taught work in a very slow way [...]. Also, they got easily distracted and I constantly have to ask them to focus.

(JC1/Peter/R1/II16–20)

Having a second round of questions in the DJ provided Peter and most of the PSTs with the occasion to extend their explanations. For example, when I asked Peter why he thought the students were like that, he replied:

I want to think that they are slow because they are very young children and it is hard for them to assimilate the knowledge even though their minds work as a sponge. [...] Regarding their distraction, I think the reason why they do it is because their attention span is very low, compared to one of an adult.

(JC1/Peter/R2/II34–52)

Peter was aware of some terms such as *assimilation* and *attention span* that are necessary to consider when working with kids. Although he did not provide a more extended definition or explanation of the terms, he did indicate how he tried to deal with students' lack of attention by reporting that 'my partner and I are constantly designing fun activities and interactive exercises' (JC1/Peter/R2/II53–55). In other words, the PSTs constantly looked for solutions to engage students learning. Generally speaking, in this cycle there was a tendency to focus more on students

(compared to the exploratory phase) although the PSTs maintained descriptive comments about their pupils.

6.1.1.4 Context: *private and public schools*

Context of teaching was a theme that was not addressed in the exploratory phase of the study. However, in C1 of the intervention phase, the PSTs showed a tendency to outline the differences between public and private schools, as well as the status of English in both contexts. Johnson (2009:25) suggests that recognising the role that context plays in teacher learning encourages novice teachers 'to engage in ongoing, in-depth, and reflective examinations of their teaching practices and their students'. Regarding institutional context, Sunny wrote a short comment indicating that 'in private schools, students start learning English since they are very young; students going to public schools don't' (JC1/Sunny/R1/II1–3). Laura offered more details when she explained that she observed all levels (from kindergarten to university level), mostly private schools. She added that she was surprised by private schools' manner of teaching English as 'they are supposed to be better than public schools but they are not' (JC1/Laura/R2/II84–85). Laura continued by sharing that:

Comparing them both, it was almost the same except for some aspects. For instance, in public schools there are more students per group, which means the use of different discipline strategies and activities; in private school are less students who have less discipline problems and other activities. Apart from that, the teaching was almost the same in both schools.

(JC1/Laura/R2/II86–94)

Laura did not see any great difference between public and private schools in terms of the way teachers educated. In her view, the only difference was the size of the groups in both contexts. The fact that Laura had previously taught in a public school made her realise that:

I had to speak mostly in Spanish to make them [students] understand all what I was saying. I understand that they know little English because some of their teachers only speak with them in Spanish ever since they begin school.

(JC1/Laura/R1/II90–93)

Laura introduced the use of L1 as a problematic situation in public schools due to teachers speaking Spanish only. She confirmed this later in R2 of her DJ when I asked what she thought of students not being able to understand when she spoke in English:

This happens because they have been taught the same way for years now and they know little vocabulary and grammatical structures. As far as I observed, teachers do not challenge their students to make an effort to speak in English. They just ask them to do simple tasks. It is said that the education in private schools is better than in public schools; nevertheless, regarding English classes, I observed that it's not like that.

(JC1/Laura/R2/II104–113)

Evidently, Laura was aware of the status of the English language in both public and private schools. She stated in her journal that 'I guess I have to get accustomed to that because that's the ugly truth in public schools' (JC1/Laura/R1/II96–97). Laura was able to identify a number of factors (methodological stasis, failure to challenge students, and reliance on simple tasks in English); however, her comments in her reflection were descriptive and based on personal observations. For example, in the quote above, she attributed the low English level to the way the classes are being taught in both contexts; but she did not reflect upon possible reasons (e.g. if it was because of the methodology per se, or the way the teachers applied the methodology, or the teachers' responsibility to use English in the class, and the consequences in students learning).

6.1.2 Summary of findings

After analysing the data in C1, I would like to present a summary of the main findings, which led me to plan the actions for C2. For this first cycle of reflection, it can be observed throughout data in 6.1.1 that the PSTs' statements were descriptive. Although they were asked to provide more details as well as their stance on some of the aspects they mentioned (see Table 1 and 2 in Appendix 3), they usually maintained a level of general commentary (e.g. when talking about strategies used, they did not mention which those strategies were, or when describing students they usually stated that: 'She seemed really spoiled, she didn't listen nor obey me [...] (JC1/Peter/R2/II18–21)). However, having a second and (in some cases) third round of questions in the DJs, as well as the opportunity to share their concerns in the GR, provided an opportunity for the PSTs to extend their thoughts. Most of the PSTs were able to offer more details based on personal judgement and experiential learning (either personal or from experienced teachers). When referring to classroom management issues, especially discipline problems, two PSTs included not only the description of the problems but also the description of how they managed the situation, and a superficial report of the results (e.g. it worked well).

In C1, the PSTs were able not only to describe, but also to compare various contexts (e.g. public and private schools,) that helped them understand some circumstances they were facing and how activities worked to control discipline (section 6.1.1.2). Realisations and increasing of awareness on specific situations were evident in the data from DJs and GR. Data showed that the PSTs were achieving the second level of reflection (Descriptive/Technical), but they did not provide more insightful and detailed information as the DJ rounds and the FG

developed. These findings relate to my conclusion of a preliminary analysis of C1 during data collection that I included in my RJ:

In the first reflection I noticed that the PSTs: describe situations and feelings implied by unexpected results and personal interpretations; some of them indicate what they have learned from the experience in a personal and professional view; they use that learning for improving their teaching [...]. According to this, the PSTs are in the second level of reflection. Only two of them mentioning the context but not providing more details or explaining their idea or point.

(RJ/27-02-2014/II65–82)

At the end of C1, I was hoping that the PSTs would dive more deeply into reflection and start to focus on the concrete, as well as provide more details on their teaching experience for the following cycles.

6.2 Cycle two (C2)

Data from C1 showed that the PSTs had achieved the second level (Descriptive/Technical). Taking into consideration that they were already sharing and exchanging experiences with peers and looking for advice from experienced teachers it can be said that they also had a partial third level (comparative) of reflection. However, they were not relating those experiences with literature or empirical research, a key element of the comparative level. Thus, the comparative level of reflection was encouraged in C2. The questions asked to the PSTs focused on making them think about the theory–practice relationship, as well as promoting strategies to elicit reflection (see Appendix 3, Table 3 and 4). Some questions to reinforce the previous level (Descriptive/Technical) were also included. As I stated in my RJ:

I finally decided to ask these questions because after analysing PSTs' journals and the GR in the first cycle, I could notice that [...] they [the questions] are necessary to strengthen the second level, in order to go on to the next one.

The strategies that I promoted for C2 were the following, as described in my RJ when collecting data:

Asking for feedback on more specific things; imagining situations to improve; reading about the topic of concern; analysing specific contexts; thinking beyond obvious; making reflection more systematic (time, space, environment).

(RJ, entry 27/02/14,1128–32)

6.2.1 Findings

The main focus of reflection in C2 was on the PSTs' feelings about their teaching, their co-teaching, expectations (they had started teaching a new group), discipline, and changes in their lesson planning. Additionally, the PSTs also focused on learning about their students and the materials and activities included in their lessons. The themes identified in this cycle were (Figure 12):

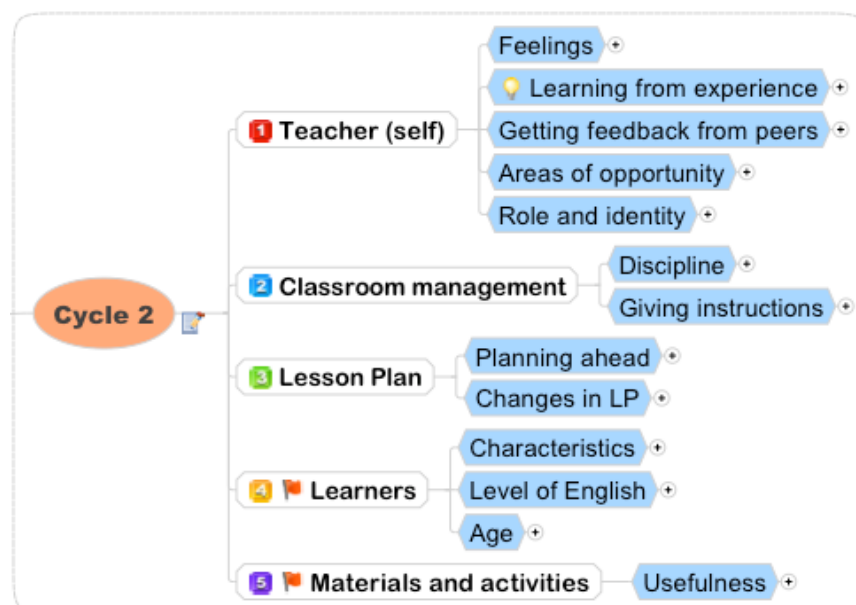


Figure 12: Themes C2

Due to space restrictions, I concentrate here on the first three themes, which were more frequently brought up by the PSTs. However, some data concerning the last two themes are also included (although not as separate themes) because the PSTs

mentioned them when reflecting upon the teachers, the class, and the lesson. That is, the themes were interrelated.

6.2.1.1 Teacher (self)

Similar to C1, writing about themselves was the most common focus of reflection, especially in the DJs. It probably was because I asked them (see Table 3, Appendix 3) about how they felt during their first week with the new groups they were teaching and what their expectations were (personal and professional). Therefore, the PSTs usually started their journals with statements describing their emotional and cognitive experience (albeit limited experience to draw on) of being a teacher, and then they shifted to a more explicit consideration of this identity. Lea, for example, wrote that the main worry she had was that her students ‘might not understand what I teach them or that they ask questions I don’t know how to respond’ (JC2/Lea/R1/II25–27). Working with a new group was provoking a negative feeling in Lea and other PSTs. Take, for example, the case of Laura who said:

I was scared and nervous the first day we went to the [school’s name] even though I wouldn’t give the class. Most of the comments we heard about those children were about how difficult it was to control them.

(JC2/Laura/R1/II1–4)

After that initial perception, Laura declared that she felt satisfied with her class since ‘the kids were quiet and participative [...]. It was a relief!’ (JC2/Laura/R1/II56–57). It seemed that for Laura the class with the new group developed well and this changed the negative feeling into a more positive one. That was not the case of her peer, Luna, who started her practicum with an optimistic attitude that turned negative when she faced students’ bad behaviour. As she declared in her journal:

Looking back at this week's work [...], I can say that [at the beginning] I was overly confident of how well I was prepared. I thought, based on my experience with the kids I taught a few weeks ago, that it was going to go pretty well or just ok, however, it was a disaster!

(JC2/Luna/R1/II1–5)

As Luna's comment showed, it seemed that relying on previous experience was common in the PSTs' decision making for the new classes. However, sometimes it did not turn out as expected and provoked a negative feeling in the PSTs. It was interesting to observe that the PSTs centred their reflections on how experience was helping them shape their knowledge during their teaching practice. For instance, when Peter stated in his initial DJ for C2 that he thought that 'repetition, fun activities, and interactive exercises are very good tools to improve the learning in very young students' (JC2/Peter/R1/II16–18), I asked him how he had learned about that. My intention with the question was to see whether he had read about suitable activities and strategies for children, and (assuming that he had) how he would relate that theory or research to his teaching practice. His response in the second round of his DJ was:

Personally, I can say that the knowledge I have about teaching at this level is from experience and classes taken [in the ELM] [...] That knowledge gained has helped me when developing my lesson plans but in the real class I have to use my experience and common sense.

(JC2/Peter/R2/II69–79)

Peter did not provide details of the specific aspects about teaching he had learned in the subjects of the ELM. Interestingly, Peter focused his answer on how experience had informed his received knowledge about teaching up to that point. This is attuned with Golombek's (2009) and Clandinin's (1992) descriptions of personal practical knowledge (PPK) that is 'a kind of knowledge carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them [...]' (Clandinin 1992:125). In most of the cases, when I asked the PSTs about how they related theory and practice, they did

not present evidence of making this connection. For instance, when I asked Sunny about that association, he answered that 'experience has helped me a lot' to learn about activities, discipline, and students' personality (JC2/Sunny/R2/II67–70). In the same vein, August made a general comment by saying that previous knowledge from books, articles, and discussions during the seminars had:

[...] helped me build an idea of how working with children was. If you ask everyone, they will tell you that you need to be more energetic, to speak louder; you need more movement, more colours, etc. It is very helpful but there is nothing like learning from first hand. There are some things in life that have to be learned that way.

(JC2/August/R2/II298–307, emphasis added by researcher)

Although August said that knowledge from theory 'is very helpful', he contrasted that knowledge with what he called 'first hand' knowledge; that is, learning from direct teaching experience rather than from theory. Most PSTs' commentaries on the theory and practice relationship (as exemplified by August) coalesced around the view that some researchers hold. Bamber (1987:127), for instance, states that 'theory is necessary but by no means sufficient' when dealing with a teacher education programme. In order to provide further insight to August's point, he appealed to metaphor to express what it meant for him learning from books and learning from experience:

You are not buying and installing a new printer for which you need to read the directions. If you want to learn how to swim you can read a book but that does not guarantee you that you can plunge into deep water and survive; you need to actually be in the water to learn how to swim. Teaching is like swimming, not like the printer [...]. This [teaching practice] is more valuable. We are being given the chance to practice in shallow water before we move to something deeper.

(JC2/August/R2/II307–322)

According to Mann (2008:12), '[m]etaphorical exploration may be particularly helpful for the first year teachers in attempting to come to terms with the complex nature of teacher knowledge and its relationship with experience'. Mann (2008,

citing Block 1996 and Zuzovsky 1994) states that metaphor is a tool or a vehicle that novice teachers use to explain, analyse, evaluate and restructure their practice. In the previous quote, August showed awareness of the help empirical research could provide. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that he would be able to learn more by coping with real classroom situations. Clearly, August's perception of gaining experience in the classroom was more important than learning from what research and researchers discuss regarding aspects related to the teaching practice. It was probably difficult for him (as for other PSTs) to see a relationship between what they were facing in the classroom and what researchers have written about since '[t]he theory/practice discourse tends to be general, rather than specific, limited in depth and detail' and 'It is not surprising that proclamations of theorists can strike teachers as simplistic and irrelevant' (Clarke 1994:16).

Data in C2 also showed that the class events that the PSTs experienced were eliciting more reflection about their teaching practice as well as looking for solutions and help. For instance, Laura said that:

I try to analyze what worked, what didn't, and what are the things that personally I have to improve. Moreover, I try asking/looking for pieces of advice from the internet, relatives, and my peer as well, so I can take those things into account to improve. In addition, once I have in mind what I want to do, I try to share it with others. In that way, I can have their opinion.

(JC2/Laura/R2/II126–135)

As Laura's statement exemplifies, in this cycle there was an increasing awareness of paying attention to and reflecting on events happening in the classroom and looking for improvement through sharing experiences with others, especially their peers. Similar to the previous cycle, C2 revealed that observing their peers was also a way the PSTs considered in order to improve their teaching. In this vein, Lea said that something that she considered important to improve practice was 'to observe more classes in order to see teacher's performance and how he or she

solved different situations' (JC2/Lea/R2/II66–70). Reflection upon how to improve their teaching practice was apparently very important for the PSTs. Apart from observing other teachers, they also talked about their preparation to teach. They described that they used to rehearse or practice the lesson beforehand, have a lesson plan, ask for advice, and learn more about the topic to be taught. Kimberly said that she tried to 'imagine what kind of questions students might ask in order to be ready to answer' beforehand (JC2/Kimberly/R2/II50–53). Even though the PSTs were drawing on the use of strategies (such as predicting), they did not engage with academic terms such as strategy, method, or approach to refer to what they did during their lesson. This made me realise that they were probably not recalling the theory (per se) they had studied in previous subjects or classes; I realised that it might be very complicated for them to link previous (pedagogical) received knowledge (Wallace 1991) with their practicum.

In this cycle there was also evidence of PSTs changing perspective and opinion about their identities as teachers. A good example of this was expressed by August in the second round of his DJ:

The thing is that now I am in that struggle of changing what I used to believe [...]. I used to be like "I want to have an easy life", "I don't want to stress", etc. This last semester I have started thinking differently. It is not only about earning a lot of money. Doing a good job is also important. I need to think more of the students, whether they are learning or not. [...] now I think that I have to put more effort because of the children, not because of my grades [for the Teaching practice subject].

(JC2/August/R2/II134–156)

August started a process of analysing his priorities as a teacher (self). It was interesting to observe a shift of perspective in which August gave more importance to students' learning and needs rather than to his own concerns, ambitions, comfort, and pre-occupations (having an easy life and getting good grades) as a PST. Prioritising students' learning was also evident in the GR. For instance,

Chicharito explained that he was not going to be able to teach all the content and he had to modify the syllabus, ‘but it doesn’t matter, what I want is for the students to learn’ (GR2/Chicharito/T40). In the GR, the PSTs agreed on the need to delve into specific learning troubles (such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and that they ‘would accept all kinds of information’ (GR2/Lea/T158) to understand more about the disorder or problem ‘because it could help us. What if in the future you have the same person? You can’t ignore a person with a problem’ (GR2/Laura/T158).

6.2.1.2 Classroom management

Classroom management was the second theme that the PSTs concentrated on in C2. There was an emphasis on describing discipline problems encountered and thinking of possible reasons, looking for solutions, asking for advice, and including activities or strategies for controlling the students. A good example of this is shown in the extract below, which represents the way the PSTs were coping with discipline and the process of reflecting upon the situation. It is worth noting that the first question asked in the GR was a general one (How was your experience with your new groups?) with the purpose to observe what the main concern of the PSTs was. The focus of attention was immediately on students’ demeanour. Laura’s reaction after my question was to say that Luna had something to say since she (Luna) had been the first to teach and that the experience had been traumatic for her:

Line

[...]

- 10 I could not control the students as I thought I would be able to
- 11 control them... um ... they were talking, and standing up during
- 12 the whole lesson... I don’t know...
- 13 I mean, I realise that children cannot be on their seats nor stay
- 14 quiet for a long period of time. I realised that the type of
- 15 activities I thought would work, did not work at all, so ... for the

16 next lesson I changed the activities and made them more
 17 interactive, more entertaining. I also created more material...
 18 still it was hard to control the group.
 19 Yes, it is a bit... a lot challenging. Right now I have no security
 20 or confidence in myself because... I mean, compared to
 21 Laura, who has already taught two lessons too [up to the
 22 moment of the GR], the students behave better with her. They
 23 are actually obedient. The students are quiet and working.
 [...]
 27 But it has been hard work and [sometimes] I think "Well, what
 28 am I doing?" and I am looking at Laura and observing what
 29 she is doing that I'm not, "Why things work for her and not for
 30 me?" At first I thought: "Well, it's maybe the kids who were
 31 very anxious and noisy". And now I'm realising that it might be
 32 something I'm doing, because I've had already two lessons
 33 (because I teach one lesson and she [Laura] teaches the next
 34 one). So, by now, I think I should already have a little more
 35 control over children, but no, it isn't happening that way. In
 36 contrast of what happens with Laura. So, then, I start to feel
 37 worried and I think: "What am I doing? Or what am I not
 38 doing?" It's been really hard for me and.... I don't know what to
 39 do ... [giggles]

(GR2/Luna/II10–39)

One aspect of Luna's articulation that is noteworthy was the process of reflection: analysing, looking for solutions, trialling, evaluating, comparing with others, and analysing again. She looked for possible reasons (for students inability to remain still and activities not working as expected) (II13–15) and indicated how she dealt with the situation and evaluated the results (II15–18). Luna continued her reflection by stating how she felt and by comparing her teaching with her peer's (II19–23). Interestingly, observing what her peer did during the following lessons triggered more reflection by Luna (II27–29), who sought additional possible reasons for her students' misbehaviour (II30–31). In the following minutes of the GR, when I asked Laura what she used to do differently to Luna and what she would recommend Luna in order to deal with the situation, they both tried collaboratively to find a possible reason for the problem Luna was facing. Laura's response was that she did not know because they used to do the same type of activities and had the same rules to control the children. She added that it probably was the way Luna talked to the students: very softly. Interestingly, Luna tried to go further in her understanding of the situation and concluded that 'maybe I get very nervous whenever I see

things are getting out of control, so maybe that's why... it's like they [students] can perceive my fear' (GR2/Luna/II45–47). Luna continued by analysing Laura's interactional style:

Well, she [Laura] does things a little different, right? She doesn't get distracted if one or two aren't on their seats, right? She continues her lesson and also she is maybe a bit more serious when trying to discipline the students... and me, on the other hand, I'm very... friendly.

(GR2/Luna/II51–55)

The interaction between Laura and Luna in the GR showed Laura's interest in helping Luna to comprehend students' misbehaviour and to improve. This is in agreement with Boud, Keogh and Walker's (1985:3) definition of dialogic reflection, which states that a group of 'individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation'. Luna's analysis of what her peer used to do in the class made her realise that Laura was very firm and strict with the children as expressed later in Lines 66 and 68. Both Luna and Laura were clearly preoccupied with what was happening during Luna's teaching practice. Laura even mentioned in her DJ that she was surprised when the strategies she (Laura) used during the class worked because she 'was mentally prepared that perhaps I would have the same problems like Luna.' (JC2/Laura/R1/II28–29). Laura added that she 'was decided to be strict with the students' after observing Luna's lesson (JC2/Laura/R1/II30). In R2, Laura explained what she had observed that made her think of her strategy to control the children:

Mostly the problems that Luna had were with discipline. [...] I noticed that the children went nuts because she was asking the students to raise their hand if they wanted to participate. [...] On the contrary, I told the students that only the kids who were in their seats and really quiet would be the ones who will help me or give their opinion. That did work for me. I would keep doing it.

(JC2/Laura/R2/II80–94)

Learning from Luna's experience was helpful to Laura who observed students' behaviour and how Luna dealt with it. Based on that observation, Laura came up with the idea of using a different strategy to control the students. In contrast to Laura, Luna was still struggling with her students' discipline, and feeling frustrated. According to Dewey (1933:9), this represents a logical reaction since reflection 'is also a process that involves [...] emotion, and passion [...]'. Clearly, Luna had been through a process (as did most of the participants) of identifying the problem, trying to understand why it was happening, looking for solutions, making changes to improve her teaching, observing her peer in order to learn from her and understand her own performance, and asking for advice from her peer. As Schön (1983) indicates, this a process that takes place with reflecting since 'As he [the reflective practitioner] tries to make sense of it [a puzzling or problem], he also reflects on the understandings which have been implicit in his action, understandings which he surfaces, criticizes, restructures, and embodies in further action' (Schön 1983:50).

Similar to C1, giving instructions was a concern regarding classroom management. However, in this second cycle the perspective was different since some PSTs referred to this in terms of students not understanding the directions and the need to use Spanish to make them clear. August, for instance, wrote about it:

You can say things like: make a line, everybody repeat or copy that in your notebooks; but sometimes it is necessary to use L1, especially when they misbehave or when giving the instructions of an activity.

(JC2/August/R2/II32–37)

The use of the first language was common when the PSTs found it difficult to make instructions clear, but also when students were not able to understand a topic being taught, as Sunny highlighted: 'teachers should use English in class [...] however, sometimes it is advisable to use Spanish when students don't understand, for example, the grammar or the vocabulary' (JC2/Sunny/R2/II40–44). Since the use of

L2 was again emphasised by several participants in C2 (in the first cycle it was included when one PST talked about the context), I asked them in the FB group their opinion about the use of Spanish in an English class. The PSTs responses were similar to what August and Sunny said in their DJs: Spanish should be used when students do not understand the instructions or when the teacher has difficulties in explaining a word. Although Laura replied (in the FB group) that she agreed with her peers that Spanish could be used when giving instructions, she stated that the use of it should depend on the students' English level (FB/Laura/Entry11). The PSTs were constantly looking for a balance for the use of L1. Attuned with this, Rose said that 'as students improve their English level, Spanish should be less used. [...] I try to speak English whenever I can in order to make them get accustomed to the [target] language' (FB/Rose/Entry11). The PSTs seemed to be aware of the need for using the target language, but they drew on Spanish as a helpful source when giving directions and managing the class. What might be more interesting to emphasise is that it seems that the PSTs' comments are interpreted in the light of experience. Moreover, exceptions in the use of L1 and L2 are being identified. The latter was evidence of higher-level thinking, allowing the PST to progress to the Comparative level of reflection.

6.2.1.3 Lesson Plan

Changing the lesson plan, achieving lesson goals, taking into consideration students' needs, and timing when planning were frequent concerns in C2. Interestingly, the PSTs showed how they engaged in reflection by analysing and providing some reasons that originated changes they had to make to the original lesson. Apart from discipline problems, they remarked on other causes that motivated them to make changes in their lessons. For example, Lea wrote in her DJ that she had to adapt the time of one activity because:

I wanted all the students to participate. I needed that time to know that all of them understood the topic of the class and that they remembered what I had taught the previous class. After that, I wondered if that was a good decision or not to take more time for the activity.

(JC2/Lea/R1/II38–43)

Evaluating students' learning, and providing more time for students to do so, was clearly more important than covering all the topics of the programme. It was interesting to observe that in her DJ Lea was reflecting-on-action about a choice she made during the class (in-action). The change caused Lea to ponder the consequences of her decision. As she stated, she was not sure about it because she had 'to reduce time from the following activities in order to finish the class on time' (JC2/Lea/R1/II36–38). Lea did not provide more insight about her conclusions on the decision made, but she declared later that, despite the changes, the goals of the lesson were achieved and that she 'need[s] to learn to manage the time since we only have 60 minutes to teach a lesson' (JC2/Lea/R1/II59–60). Apparently, administering time was a concern that most PSTs had when planning their lesson. August said that he was 'worried about the time more than anything else' because he 'wouldn't know what to do with remaining time if the activity was easy [and students finished quickly], or what if I need more time to finish a difficult activity?' (JC2/August/R1/II34–38). August added that when he had this dilemma, he usually agreed to follow his peer's advice when planning the lesson 'since he had more experience and knew more dynamic activities' (JC2/August/R1/II29–30). Apparently, PSTs lack of teaching experience was decisive in looking for help from their peers and drawing on collaboration to plan their class. Like August, Laura declared that she and her peer used to plan together and talk 'beforehand about what we can omit if we need time for other activities, or what we can add to the class if we have extra time', and that in case of possible changes 'we consult with each other' (JC2/Laura/R1/II98). The situation with timing made them invest some

time to reflect on what the best choice was and to look for a balance in their teaching (regarding timing). In the GR Laura talked about her concern due to the lack of time to cover all the content of the programme because they had to teach their young children (three and four years old) one topic per class. Laura continued by sharing her dilemma:

Turn	Speaker	Line	
86	Laura:	302 303 304	So, we don't know what to do, if we should skip that topic and start a new one or stick to the one we already began...
87	Lea:	[...] 310 311 312 313 314 315	[...] Something that happened to us [Lea and Kimberly] was that, at the beginning, we were following the content programme that our mentor teacher gave us, but there were topics that the [young] children hadn't seen in Spanish, so how can you teach them that in English?
			[...]
88	Researcher:	320	Did that work better?
89	Lea:	321 322	Better, because they already knew the words in Spanish [...]
90	Researcher:		[...]
91	Lea:		[...]
92	Laura:	[...] 332 333	[...] And, how can anyone do that [teach three topics] in one week with only three lessons?!
93	Luna:	334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342	No [you can't], and the children forget [...], the kids don't remember. So that's what we were talking about, that it'd be better if we take one topic per week because that way the students have enough repetition of the topic and it is more likely for them to remember... But we aren't sure if we can just play by our own rules and throw that content programme through the window.

It was remarkable to observe in the extract that this type of interaction triggered collaborative reflection and exchange of experiences in order to understand the situation and to help each other. Reflecting on the lack of time due to the amount of topics led to the discussion of students' skills. When Laura exposed her concern

(T86), Lea intervened to talk about her own experience, (apparently) as an example of what she and her peer did in the same school and with children the same age as Laura's students. Luna and Laura took this as valuable recommendation, as Luna expressed in her DJ:

Laura and I took into consideration the advice given to us during the group reflection about focusing on only a few pieces of vocabulary. So far, this seems to be working much better than having seven or more words to work on.

(JC2/Luna/R2/II44–50)

In turn 92 (partly removed) Laura emphasised that the content was extensive. She asked what seemed to be a rhetorical question that Luna helped to answer (T93) by exposing the children's limitations at that age (not being able to recall many words and the need of repetition). This clearly showed the PSTs' awareness of taking into account the children's psychomotor skills when designing a lesson. Moreover, in the cases of Luna, Laura, Lea, and Kimberly, who all taught in the same school, noticing that the syllabus was ambitious and in disagreement with students' needs and abilities made them think about the institutional context regarding their English classes. During the GR, Lea, Laura, and Luna said that there was no English coordinator in the school they were doing their teaching practice and that it was their mentor teacher who provided them with the syllabus. Lea explained later in the GR that the mentor teachers acted as liaisons between the UQRoo and the institution, in order to sign agreements for the PSTs to do their teaching practice. That is, the mentor teachers did not work in that school thus did not know the students or their needs when they suggested the syllabus at the beginning of the term. When the PSTs talked to the mentor teachers about the syllabus not being suitable, they were given the opportunity to suggest changes to the programme and adapt it according to what they had observed were the students' needs and previous knowledge in Spanish (as Lea suggested in T87

above). Realisations of syllabuses in disagreement with students' real needs and abilities were also expressed by August, who was teaching in a public primary school:

That's also what we have talked about: that the programme seems a little too ambitious. Especially because, in practice, you realise that the students cannot learn so fast, and you have to slow it down... You can't cover the whole content. [...] But yeah, we have to modify a little bit what we see each week, and there are things that we can do from the planning or omit.

(GR2/August/T101)

August and his peer's school were part of the NEPBE. August stated that they had to follow the syllabus demanded in every school in the Mexican Republic; however, it seemed that they were given the freedom to adapt the programme during the school year. Even though this was a good opportunity for me to ask the PSTs their opinion about the NEPBE, and see how they related the programme to the context and students' realities in Mexico, the interaction in the GR led to continued talk about the changes to their lesson plans and what originated those changes.

When talking about the lesson, the participants also stated that they used to assess whether or not they had achieved the goals of the lesson. In R1 of the DJ, they usually claimed that they evaluated the students, but they did not provide more details nor mention any (specific) form of evaluation. Thus, in R2 or R3 I asked them how they knew that the objectives were achieved. Most PSTs responded that they knew that the students had learned because they were able to participate in the class and use specific vocabulary correctly (e.g. when Laura (R2/II123) wrote that her students 'were able to identify and perform the commands'). That is, observing students' reactions and participation during the class was used as evidence of learning. Furthermore, the PSTs reported that they monitored their students' likes, dislikes, and needs (according to their age) in order to define the type of activities and materials to include in forthcoming lesson plans. Evidently, in

C2 the PSTs were considering more about students' needs (than in C1) when planning their lessons and making adjustments. Having second or third round in their DJs provided them with the opportunity to extend their comments, although they still remained descriptive when referring to their planning.

6.2.2. Summary of findings

Throughout the data in the previous section, it can be observed that some of the PSTs still tended to describe specific situations (e.g. discipline problems, changes in their lesson plans). Although the PSTs focused on the same aspects of the teaching practice (themes) as in C1, it was clear that they started to include more reflective insights about what generated certain situations (especially puzzles regarding discipline), trying to understand what and why something happened (see Luna's articulation in 6.2.1.2 as an example), and looking for a balance in their decision making. Most PSTs showed their commitment to the process of understanding but also to finding possible solutions and improving their teaching practice. Interestingly, the PSTs started to focus on the concrete, as well as provide more details on their teaching experiences. There were data that showed that the PSTs gave more time to the analysis of what was happening in the classroom and what was causing the problems, mainly in the GR1 in which they were able to interact with their peers, exchange information and receive and provide advice.

In C2 there was also evidence of a change of perspective by PSTs about their role and identity and what was more important to consider in their teaching practice. Apparently, unlike C1, the PSTs focused a great deal on giving prominence to students' learning and needs rather than to covering content of the syllabus or even getting good grades for the Teaching practice subject. This was probably because I

had introduced in the GR the idea of learning more about students and considering more aspects to understand their students' behaviour and learning.

As stated in 6.2 one of the goals in my intervention in C2 was to enhance the third level of reflection, which fosters seeking new insights from various perspectives and points of view, especially from empirical research and the relation of theory and practice. PSTs considering others' points of view was evident (e.g. receiving advice from peers and their family); however, there was very little evidence of the theory-practice link in C2, even though I prompted the theory-practice relationship (See Table 3, Appendix 3). While some PSTs said that theory had helped them when planning their lessons (without being specific nor providing more details), they generally focused their attention on indicating how the teaching practice and feedback from their peers and other (in-service) teachers were informing their experience rather than the theory studied in previous terms/subjects. Sometimes, they reported that the experience was leading them to revise some of the advice given to them in the course. Up to this point, as I expressed in my RJ (12-03-2014/II46–51) when I did a preliminary analysis of the second cycle, I was feeling that:

They are analysing more things and considering other's perspectives and opinions but avoiding the theory and empirical research. They are aware of the usefulness of reading and researching but not including any in their reflections [...].'

Although the PSTs did not relate theory and practice, there were some quotes from the DJs and the GR indicating that they were open to learning from different sources. For instance, when Laura indicated that she was using Google to find information to help her manage the class (JC2/Laura/R2/II40–41), or when Lea was talking about a student with attention deficit, she acknowledged the importance and

need to 'read and research more about the problem and maybe talk to the student's mom' (GR2/Lea/T154).

In this cycle, I included a notion that had emerged in C1: the context. I asked the PSTs about what other situations and aspects, inside and outside the classroom, they needed to be aware of when teaching. All the participants focused their answer on talking about their students' age (e.g. limitations they had due to students being young learners), and the importance of focusing on their students rather than the syllabus of the school. Apparently, since I asked them in C1 to focus on knowing more about their students, they concentrated a lot on that in C2. Even when they talked about the syllabus of the schools they were working in, they only said that 'the programme seems a little too ambitious' (GR/August/T101) and that children were not able to learn everything if they had to follow the programme. As I noted before, this was a good opportunity to talk about the status of English in Mexico and how the NEPBE was addressing the teaching of English in public schools (for instance, whether the schools provided good conditions to teach, or how economic and social situations would affect the children's learning). Nevertheless, the PSTs' interest during the GR was more focused on lesson planning rather than talking about the context of English teaching in the state and the country. I decided to drop this line of the discussion as I noticed that, for the students, it was important and practical (up to this stage of the intervention) to pay more attention to modifications they had to make to the content of the programmes. The context in C2 was therefore not discussed.

6.3 Cycle three (C3)

In the previous cycle, I intended to promote the third level of reflection, which seeks insights from different perspectives (e.g. peers, students, and authorities among

others), with special attention to the evidence of practitioners relating theory and practice. Data from C2 showed that the PSTs were involved in a process of understanding why an incident happened (mainly regarding discipline), looking for a solution to improve, asking for advice from peers and experienced teachers, and changing or adapting activities. There was some evidence of change of belief concerning their identity, based on personal judgement, knowledge, and experience (Ward and McCotter 2004). However, the theory and practice relationship was not evident. Based on the previous review of literature and the guide I was using to foster higher levels of reflection, I believed at this point of the study that it would be important for the PSTs to become critical and that I had to lead them to complete the third level of reflection before proceeding to the next. Therefore, the plan for C3 was to continue fostering of the third (comparative) level, especially the theory and practice relationship. In order to guide the PSTs towards the completion of the comparative level, the instructions for the DJ were more structured and specific (see Appendix 3, Table 5 and 6) to promote the theory and practice relationship. The strategies introduced in C3 were: 'ask for others' opinion and advice; analyse critically your readings; relate what you read to what you are doing in class; recall what you learned during the career and relate it to your practice; analyse the alternative options you have of activities, methods, and theories; and trial activities, materials, and approaches so you can see what works and what does not work'.

6.3.1 Findings

Similar to C1 and C2, the first two themes that the PSTs focused their attention on (in terms of frequency) in C3 were: Classroom management and Teacher (self). Whereas in previous cycles Teacher (self) was the most frequent theme, in this cycle it came second, placing Classroom management first. The other themes

emerged in this cycle also varied in frequency (Figure 13). For instance, Materials and activities were the last theme in C1 and C2; however, it was the third theme in C3 (see Appendix 11 for a comparison).

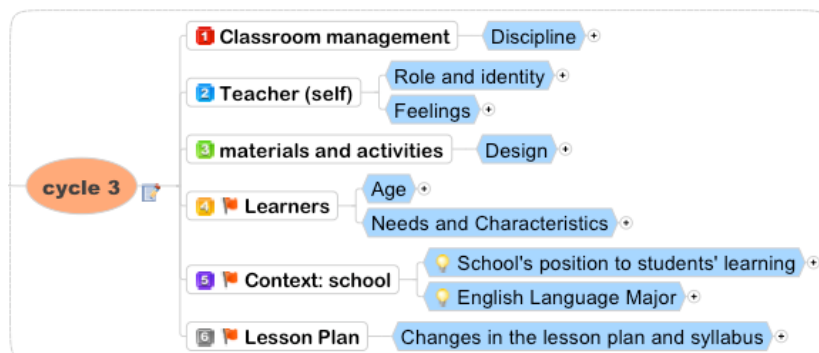


Figure 13: Themes C3

In the following sections, I analyse the manner in which the main themes were approached by the PSTs, with special attention to the process of reflection.

6.3.1.1 Classroom management

Discipline was the major concern that the PSTs reflected upon. As in C2, the PSTs usually looked for an explanation and a solution for improvement after providing a brief description of a situation. August, for example, attributed misbehaviour to the students' age: 'they are children; their attention span is shorter. I should make my explanation shorter' (JC3/August/R2/II57–59). August's reasoning was followed by a decision to solve the situation: he would 'not allow them to get out during their break' as a way to control their actions in class. In this cycle most PSTs tried to link events happening in the classroom with something they previously read:

This probably has to do with the behaviourism theory; something related to the positive and negative punishment and reward.

(JC3/August/R2/II60–64)

August later stated that he did not remember very well what behaviourism was about. This was indication that he (as most PSTs) was trying to connect his

practice to previous knowledge, apparently, due to my insistence. Most PSTs failed to be specific in the definition or understanding of the terminology. For instance, Lea wrote that:

The discipline problems I am facing made me think of the subjects that I have studied. [...] The readings and notes I took in the Philosophy of education, Materials design and Teaching practice 1 are the main sources that come to my mind to try to find some solutions.

(JC3/Lea/R1/II12–24)

Lea was able to recall the subjects she had studied about teaching, but she did not give (in any of the rounds of her DJ, even though I asked her) more details on specific strategies, approaches, or theories she planned to use to achieve her goal. For me, this was re-confirmation that relating theory with their practice was not easy for the PSTs (Clarke, 1994). In this regard, I would like now to note that in C3 the PSTs justified why they found it difficult to link theory with practice. Luna stated that most of what she had read about discipline and classroom management were guidelines that seemed ‘so different’ to her reality and ‘it doesn’t seem to work with our children’ (JC3/Luna/R1/II17–25). In a second round of the DJ, I asked Luna what exactly she found different. She responded in the following way:

I think that many of the things I’ve read don’t apply to my teaching context because many of the things you find apply to an ESL setting. Obviously, our children do not have a direct need to use the L2 for communication so it is less likely for them to use what they learn in the classroom. Also, our class size is not a common one as I have found out. Most of the activities I have found are made for smaller classes than our thirty or forty-something-students’ class.

(JC3/Luna/R2/II33–44)

By comparing literature to her immediate teaching context, Luna realised that what she had read from theory was not necessarily applicable to the context; and that there was a gap between the two aspects (context versus theory). Luna’s quote was a clear example of how she was expressing more critically her opinion

after receiving a direct question from me in the DJ. As Luna said, 'I realized that I can only put those guidelines into practice by trial and error just to see what works and what doesn't' (JC3/Luna/R1/II26–28). This view was shared by Laura when I asked her (in R2) what she was taking from the book she was reading (reported in the initial reflection of C3), and how she decided on what to take or not take from the author:

[...] I think I will take into account most of the things the book says and put them in practice. If they don't work, it will be time to look for more information. I have to say, observation and analysis/reflection of what happens in the classroom help me decide what to take or not from the book.

(JC3/Laura/R2/II114–121)

Luna and Laura's commentaries showed that they (as most of the participants in C3) were aware of the importance of analysing what they read, trialling and evaluating the applicability of the activities or classroom management strategies suggested by the literature. Laura's last sentence is a similar kind of comment that was made in C2: that decision-making was influenced by what they observed and learned about their students' needs, what they were experiencing in their teaching practice, and the results of actions taken. Having the opportunity to teach seemed to be very useful for the PSTs to start relating theory to situations they were facing in their teaching practice (especially concerning discipline and materials and activities to use). Laura pointed this out when I asked how she was feeling about having the opportunity to connect to her teaching methods and approaches learned:

It feels great when for the first time we apply something we learnt and see the result. In the university [UQRoo], we mostly talked about theory and we designed lessons, but we never put them in practice with different students. Therefore, we don't know how it will work if we apply it in a specific context/students. We just have this fake environment that we create pretending to be students who have different levels of English.

It is worth noting that before *Teaching practice 1* and 2, the PSTs are asked to plan hypothetical classes that they should present in front of their peers in the classroom (microteaching). Laura referred to this as the ‘fake environment’ in which she had to do her microteaching. Evidently, having to apply their first lesson plans in a simulated situation did not help the PSTs realise and make sense of the actual application of strategies, approaches, and theory studied previous to the teaching practice. Apparently, studying theory rather than having the opportunity to apply it in a real context from the beginning was a concern that the PSTs had; similar to the findings that Borges et al. (forthcoming) had when they conducted a study to learn about the PSTs’ opinion of the ELM, regarding teaching practice, in the UQRoo in 2012. This view also emerged during the GR3 when Peter and Laura talked about the theory and practice relationship. Laura, for instance, said that:

I feel that sometimes planning our lessons can help us, but I believe that here at the university [...] we learn the methodology, but from a general perspective... not really focused on a certain group, like children, teenagers or adults. So, I think this is something that would be worth considering for the major [...].

(GR3/Laura/T94)

It seemed that asking the PSTs to reflect on how the theory helped them in understanding and finding solutions made them realise that the ELM curriculum needed some improvement, mainly regarding the teaching practice at various levels. A more important point to highlight is that in turning the attention towards the more theory-based course in the ELM and insisting on the relevance of practical experience and in situ assessment, they implicitly diminished the value of making theory–practice links.

Another finding in C3 (that I see as part of their analysis to understand an event) was that the PSTs integrated moral and ethical perspectives concerning discipline

decisions and possible consequences in their students' education. It is interesting that, although they sidelined the theory aspect (that is considered an element of the third level), they engaged directly with this aspect of the teaching practice, which might represent a feature of a higher (fourth) level of reflection. For example, in the GR, Chicharito described a difficult situation with a student who hit another student. Chicharito explained that the head teacher had asked him to ignore the child, as advised by the psychologist who was taking care of the case; however, as the PST narrated, when the child hit his classmate, the 'head teacher grabbed him while placing him in front of the kid he had just punched, and told the student who receive the punch to hit him back!' (GR3/Chicharito/T41). Chicharito expressed that:

I think she [the teacher] was right to do that! [laughs] Really! Because next time he tries to hit or punch someone, he'll know he'd receive the same thing back and he will learn that he shouldn't do that.

(GR3/Chicharito/T43)

Chicharito agreeing with the head teacher's decision generated a discussion among the PSTs. In the following extract, it can be observed that the PSTs revealed their moral stance when it came to the ways a discipline problem could be approached. There was an interesting tension between one set of values (the teacher's action) and another (the ethical perspective); apparently, a common reflective process that PSTs needed in order to negotiate what was correct doing or not:

Turn	Speaker	Line
47	Peter:	244 We can say that it makes sense, in a certain way, 245 inside the teacher's head and after all the measures 246 that Chicharito says she has taken to control this 247 kid... but from an ethical point of view and from an 248 institutional perspective I believe is not the right thing 249 to do.
48	Researcher:	250 [...]

49	Chicharito:	251	If the parents actually see it, maybe they'll say
		252	something to the teacher; but honestly, if that was
		253	my son... I don't know.
			[...]
50	Researcher:	257	What would you all do in this kind of situation?
52	Lea:	258	Well, I don't believe it was a good thing... As a
		259	teacher I don't allow that to happen. I think children
		260	can be (well, I don't want to use that word but)
		261	"punished" in other ways... But, to encourage him to
		262	punch back?! It's kind of out of place because it is
		263	aggressive. And if other children see this, they are
		264	going to think it is the right thing to do... Or the
		265	normal thing to do. And then they are going to start
		266	hitting each other in the classroom.
		267	Well, I think it is not the way to solve this situation.
53	Chicharito:	268	Well, I think that... I imagine they've tried many
		269	different ways and they don't work on the student...
		270	because, to be honest, he is quite rebellious.
54	Sunny:	271	Maybe it's just a strategy that the teacher had
		272	applied before. Maybe that's why she decided to do
		273	that... I believe she is an experienced teacher and
		274	she had dealt with this kind of situations before and it
		275	worked; that's probably why she decided to do it... If
		276	that's the case, I think it's okay, because if it worked
		277	then it's okay to do it.
		278	Still, if it is against the school policy because (let's
		279	say) you are promoting violence among the children,
		280	then, that's where everything becomes a bigger
		281	issue.
55	Researcher:	282	[...]
56	Lea:	289	It's just that I feel that students may see it as
		290	something that is normal. I mean, if they see that the
		291	kid is punching back... Imagine if, let's say, they see
		292	that he does something to me [pointing the person
		293	next to her] and I just do the same to him... I mean, if
		294	that happens among other students, they are just
		295	going to copy the actions they see around them
		296	during their lessons...

Even though Chicharito's initial comment caused some laughs, the PSTs participating in the GR3 started to express their (opposite) stance on the event. Interestingly, as Chicharito did (T49 and T53), Peter (T47, I1244–247) and Sunny (T54, I1271–277) tried to find a possible explanation or justification for the head teacher's reaction; however, they immediately expressed their disagreement alleging ethical and institutional perspectives. Listening to talk about extreme actions to manage discipline in the classroom made the PSTs reflect on what

happened in the classroom from an ethical perspective, and the social and institutional consequences of the head teacher's choice. The discussion during the GR3 gave the PSTs the opportunity to think about what other (in-service) teachers do, and analyse and contrast what they had experienced in similar situations (details that I will avoid describing here due to space constraints). These reflections made the PSTs consider more conventional solutions. Sunny, for instance, stated that he 'would definitely use a different strategy' (GR3/Sunny/T65), and Peter said that he would 'punish the boy by not allowing him to go out and play during the break, fill up a report and make an appointment with the parents [to talk about the student's behaviour]' (GR3/Peter/T71).

6.3.1.2 Teacher (self)

When talking about themselves, the PSTs focused mainly on their feelings about their teaching experience, and how they learned from different sources (such as the Internet, blogs, articles, and books). Most comments in C3 showed how they were developing their role and identity as teachers. A clear example of this was Laura's statement on how she was feeling about her teaching (up to the moment of her third reflection). She said that she had had 'highs and low' in the past two weeks:

However, I'm aware that not all the time the class is going to be perfect (maybe because of myself, the students, the context or other factors). Lately, I'm trying to look on the bright side of things. If something is not working, it's my duty to look for a solution. Also, I'm trying to experiment with the kids. I'm really curious of what they are or not able to do.

(JC3/Laura/R1/II1-7)

There was an increasing awareness of Laura's responsibility to improve her teaching, and to pay attention to and constantly reflect upon her students' needs and skills in order to understand the teaching context and make the best decisions

as a teacher. Furthermore, becoming a good teacher was highlighted. When I asked Laura why she felt it was her 'duty to look for a solution', she replied that it was because she wanted to be a good teacher. She explained that:

According to the text you [the researcher] shared with us on Facebook (by Brown), constant preparation is a quality that good language teachers must have. I want to be good; thus, looking for solutions will allow me to improve my performance, which in the long run will benefit the students. [...] I want to be the kind of teacher that students get excited with when come to the classroom. I want them to enjoy my class and show them that learning the English language is not always boring. And last but not least, I want to be a role model for them (I want I lot of things, don't I?).

(JC3/Laura/R2/II16–33)

Interestingly, Laura considered her role as a teacher from social and ethical perspectives as important aspects to have a positive impact in her students' lives and learning, as well as an impact in her teaching practice. Laura's quote above also showed that she related information provided by a researcher (H. Douglas Brown) to how she saw herself as a teacher (or the type of teacher she wanted to become). The PSTs were apparently aware of their preparation as teachers, considering different perspectives, theory, and empirical research; however, most comments were vague. For instance, I frequently read: 'I research on educational blogs and the internet for advice from people with similar [discipline] experiences [...]. I've read some online articles' (JC3/John/R1/II13–14), or 'I remember from the course of Philosophy of Education [...] that a teacher must change, adapt or adopt different teaching methods and techniques to ensure students' learning' (JC3/Luna/R1/II4–8), or:

I found a "pdf" book about teaching English to children (Teaching English to Children by Wendy A. Scott and Lisbeth H. Ytreberg) which is really interesting. I have read some sections of it and I have been relating some of the things it mentions about children to my experience.

(JC3/Laura/R1/II33–39)

Up to this point, that there was an apparent rising awareness on reviewing literature, and on learning (as teachers) from various perspectives rather than only from experience and observations of peers and in-service teachers. Regarding their improvement as teachers, the PSTs were drawing more on theory to continue learning (by trying what authors suggested, for instance), additional to other strategies used (i.e. asking for advice). Interestingly, in C3 the PSTs mentioned the importance of continuing their preparation (teacher development) by attending 'workshops on group management' (GR3/Peter/T115), conferences (GR3/Lea/T128), and 'undertaking postgraduate studies to specialise' (DJ3/August/R2/II102).

6.3.1.3 Materials and activities

The process of reflecting upon materials and activities in C3 was similar to the process that the PSTs followed when writing about classroom management in 6.3.1.1. Data in this cycle showed that PSTs observed how the activities and materials included in their lessons worked. Luna, for instance, wrote that:

[...] I had to change, create or borrow different ideas to present the information to the children because I found that the techniques I was using during the first week of practice were not effective. I was using content presentation through relating vocabulary with pictures, and a lot of repetition drills. One [activity] I have found the most effective is storytelling. [...] Just this week I started using some mimics to relate some vocabulary (like TPR) [...] this made me build a sturdier routine of using mimics to help them [students] get used to this new technique.

(JC3/Luna/R2/II14–30)

Luna (as most PSTs) was in a process of adopting new approaches to teach vocabulary to young children and observing what worked in order to plan and design more adequate activities and materials for her students. This was usually according to what they observed appropriate for their students' age, preferences,

and needs. As Kimberly stated, the lesson would depend ‘on what kind of students we have and the activities we know work best with them’ (JC3/Kimberly/R2/II38–40). Moreover, the PSTs were also making decisions based on what they had read about materials and activities to teach. The fact that they referred to strategies such as ‘relating vocabulary with pictures’ and ‘repetition drills’ (see Luna’s quote above) was a way to see that the PSTs were recalling some strategies. In a similar vein, Laura said that she and her peer ‘use a lot TPR and suggestopedia’. Luna added in her DJ that:

[...] I think that some of the aspects of the methods, such as repetition, affective learning and social cooperation, can be taken into consideration for use but I think that a more eclectic approach seems more suitable.

(JC3/Luna/R2/II120–126)

Luna’s commentary on being eclectic showed her awareness of the variety of methods and strategies suggested by experts that she could use according to what was adequate for the students. Laura and Luna were more conscious of the application of some strategies, approaches, and methods; however, most PSTs participating were not able to identify strategies or approaches, or explain what they understood or thought of them. As I mentioned in 6.3.1.1, one possible explanation is that the PSTs had not had the opportunity to see the application of the theory in a real teaching context before doing their practicum. August’s statement supported this:

In Materials design I did a presentation about local and global errors, I still have that in mind because I did it. [...] Honestly, I forgot about most of the methods and approaches I studied then. [...] It is more like I have some points in my mind of the dos and the don’ts. Now, what is related to every theory? I had not given it a real thought. [...] Sadly, [...] I don’t remember them.

(JC3/August/R1/II47–48,R2/II45–50,II84–85)

6.3.2 Summary of findings

As stated before, my plan for C3 was to promote the comparative or third level of reflection in a more straightforward manner. Data throughout 6.3.1 showed that most PSTs were becoming aware of the importance of relating and using theory in their teaching practice. However, they usually favoured more practical considerations or admitted that they had only a vague idea of relevant theory. Directly and constantly asking the PSTs to relate theory and practice led (or at least urged) them to include some instances of this link, leaving them no choice but to refer to theory. The PSTs in C3 focused more on recalling strategies to manage their class, and the methods and approaches used to motivate students' participation and learning, but without providing evidence of critically analysing those methods and approaches. In this cycle the PSTs generally followed the process of reflection that they started in C2: describing a situation; analysing possible reasons; presenting solutions, trying new strategies, methods, and approaches; evaluating outcomes; and, in some instances, making changes in their teaching when necessary (adapting or discarding activities). According to Jay and Johnson (2002) and Ward and McCotter (2004), these actions are evidence of achieving a Comparative level, together with looking for insights from different perspectives (peers, students, authorities, theory, and empirical research). However, for them to complete the comparative level, they were supposed to critically analyse theory. Up to this moment of the research, as I reported in my RJ (01-04-2014/1123–24), I was feeling 'a little bit frustrated since this is the aspect I have been dealing with for more time!' However, this situation also made me recapitulate the reason why I wanted them to relate theory and practice:

It's not that I think that they HAVE TO [relate theory and practice], but I want them, at least, to be aware of everything they can learn from other sources and see what happens when they have more options of things they can

do in class. I am happy with the fact that some of them are trying to relate T-P and using previous knowledge, but I am worried about the ones who are not doing it!

(RJ/01-04-14/II40–47)

After analysing this cycle and the previous one, I concluded that it was 'difficult for them to do it [relate theory and practice] at this stage of their training since they don't have enough teaching experience' (RJ/25-03-14/II90–95). As Laura said (see 6.3.1.1), so far they had only had a 'fake environment' to teach. Interestingly, as they were gaining experience, they were appreciating the value of the practice and experience over the theory.

It was interesting to observe in C3 that there was an increasing awareness to continue their preparation. In C2 they focused on how they prepared themselves for a lesson, whereas in C3 the focus was more on the importance of continuing their preparation and development as professional. Evidence showed too that the PSTs started to analyse events in the classroom (concerning discipline measures) from a moral, social and pedagogical perspective, elements of the fourth level of reflection: Critical/Transformative level (van Manen 1977; Hatton and Smith 1995; Jay and Johnson 2002; Larrive 2008; Ward and McCotter 2004).

Concerning the FB group, since I noticed in the previous cycle that the PSTs did not participate as frequently and enthusiastically as expected, I made the decision to stop posting. However, one of the participants of the study did share two entries in C4: one with a video on what teachers learn the first year teaching; and the other with a PDF book. The rest of the PSTs did not share any opinion about the video or book.

6.4 Cycle four (C4)

In the previous cycle, I offered evidence that the PSTs drew on some theoretical knowledge in order to understand students' behaviour and the type of strategies and activities that would work better according to students' needs and characteristics: some of them were able to recall some strategies that they used or wanted to use and reflected on the possibility of implementing them in their teaching context. However, the data showed that most of the PSTs were not critical (a key element of the Comparative level I was promoting in C3). This finding made me re-evaluate my position on the theory and practice relationship and on my 'guiding' the PSTs to be more critical. Up to this point of the study, my perception as a researcher was that the PSTs endeavoured to compare theory and practice due to my insisting in asking them to focus on what researchers and empirical research had to say on matters of concern (mainly discipline). I finally concluded that they, as student teachers, needed to obtain more teaching experience to start connecting theory to what they observed in the classroom and be able to critically reflect on what experts say on a specific matter. Therefore, in C4 I asked PSTs more general questions (see Appendix 3, Table 7 and 8) in a non-structured manner. My purpose was to observe whether the PSTs managed to integrate the reflective strategies I had been fostering from the beginning of the intervention, and to relate theory and practice without being compelled (by me) to do it.

6.4.1 Findings

Data in C4 showed that the PSTs focused on describing their feelings of improvement in their performance. Generally, they evaluated their progress in managing the class, and in identifying students' needs and preferences of activities. This retrospective reflection also had a dialogic relationship with the initial

questions I asked them (see Appendix 3, Table 7 and 8). Even though the questions did not require responses on specific aspects of the teaching practice, the PSTs centred their attention on (Figure 14):

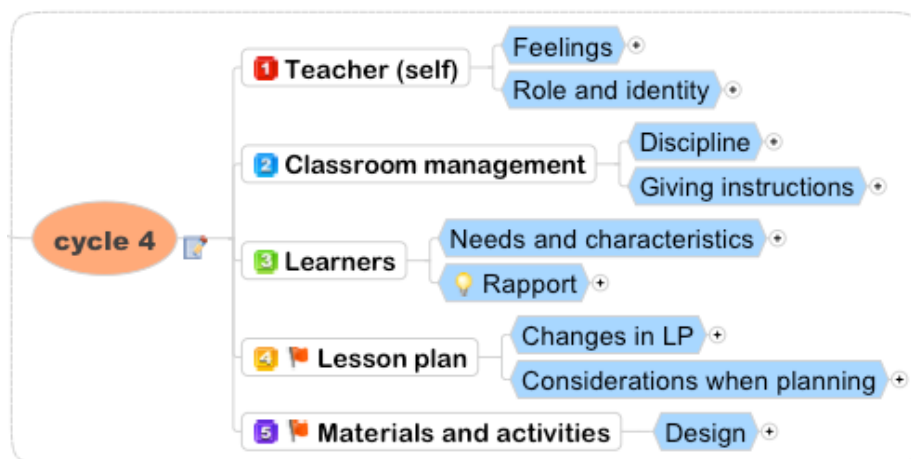


Figure 14: Themes in C4.

In the following sections, I provide detail of the way in which the PSTs reflected on their concerns, realisations, improvements, and development.

6.4.1.1 Teacher (self)

In this cycle, the PSTs reflected on their own development in various aspects of their practicum such as classroom management, lesson planning, activities, and materials. As in preceding cycles, they usually described the negative feelings they had at the beginning (e.g. nervousness and fear), followed by the sense of confidence gained in the course of time. Feeling afraid and uncertain about their teaching was typical reflection of the PSTs. Laura, for instance, said that when she ‘started giving classes, [she] was scared because [she] didn’t know what could go wrong’ (JC4/Laura/R1/II2–4). Laura did not specify what aspects of the teaching she thought ‘could go wrong’; nevertheless, it seemed that the lack of experience (to foresee possible solutions), not knowing the class (school, students, context), and not knowing appropriate strategies and activities, were causing PSTs’ negative feelings when they started. Studies conducted on how novices feel during their

initial teaching suggest that becoming a teacher is seen as a complex process and involves tensions and anxieties concerning discipline, methods, materials, and students' engagement (Rogers and Babinsky 2002; Bullough et al. 1991). Compared to C1 and C2 in which the PSTs only described feelings, in this cycle they were able to provide more details to show a process of understanding why they felt that way (Laura's quotes above), and how their teaching experiences had helped them improve their practice and gain confidence. For instance, realising that 'ups and downs' (JC4/Laura/R1/II5) can happen in a lesson was one of the conclusions that made the PSTs feel more confident about their teaching. Luna shared the view that:

[...] most of the times the classes don't go as we expect but I still feel good because I have tried something new and I have gained the knowledge that maybe that activity doesn't work, or I could think of a different way to present it or perform it.

(JC4/Luna/R1/II39–44)

For many novice teachers experiencing difficulties and coming to terms with them seemed to be part of a healthy development process in which they had opportunities to learn and improve the class and their own performance. As Laura expressed in the GR, when I asked the PSTs how they had been feeling in their recent classes:

We are not traumatised anymore because we are aware that there are things that can work and there are others that just won't.

(GR4/Laura/T2)

Compared to Laura's feeling nervous at the beginning of her practicum, which were due to not knowing what 'could go wrong' in the class, her position by the time of C4 had changed to being aware of negative results in the lesson and learning from the experience, as she declared in her DJ: 'it is not a big deal if something goes really bad. It is an opportunity to try new things and improve different aspects'

(JC4/Laura/R1/II6–8). Maynard and Furlong (1995) state that novices usually go through a process of negotiation when they start teaching and that it involves five stages of development. They suggest that one of the stages is related to ‘recognising difficulties’ and learning to deal with them; after that ‘the novice teacher begins to gain more of an awareness of their teaching situation’ and enter a stage known as ‘reaching a plateau’ where they ‘start to cope better with routines of everyday teaching’ (Farrell 2008:3). Data revealed that most PSTs were aware of their improvement in many aspects of their teaching, which made them feel more confident and with a sense of improvement. August, for example, wrote that:

One of the most important things of this process is that I have built more confidence. [...] I have had the opportunity to get to know how children work. I know how to discipline them, I know some games and activities to make the class less boring and more dynamic, I have an idea of what topics they like and, most importantly, I know how they can react to all of these actions.

(JC4/August/R1/II1–20)

Compared to the PSTs’ first reflections (in the exploratory phase and C1), there was now evidence of them using one of the strategies promoted to enhance reflection in the study: observing and paying more attention to students’ preferences, needs, and reactions to controlling strategies and materials and activities. However, the PSTs were still descriptive in terms of what they had observed and learned during the time of their teaching practice about the learners, class management, and activities (that August mentioned above). What is important to highlight is the sense of accomplishment and improvement they experienced after learning what strategies and activities were appropriate to use with their students and specific context. This feeling was also evident when they reflected on their teaching performance. Laura, for instance, realised that she and her peer had improved some areas of their teaching:

When we started we couldn't control the children and giving instructions very well. Also, personally and considering that I teach young children, I was shy and couldn't do some things such as dancing, playing voices or pulling faces.

(JC4/Laura/R1/II11–16)

Improving the areas they had more problems with at the beginning of their practicum (as reported in previous cycles) increased Laura's and other PSTs' confidence about what they were doing in the classroom. Sunny said that he 'felt very satisfied' with his performance since he had noticed that he 'hardly hesitated when speaking in front of students' (JC4/Sunny/R1/II1–3). John stated in his DJ that he had noticed that he was 'much more confident now that the activities and times are much more organized and structured than the ones from the first classes' (JC4/John/R1/II13–16). John added that he was 'starting to feel as an actual teacher' (JC4/John/R1/II13). Evidently, there was an increasing awareness of improving as teachers and building a stronger identity. As Furness (2008:151) states, '[t]eacher identity is something that develops gradually over time'. In previous cycles, the PSTs had addressed their identity in terms of not being the head teacher of the group and the authority they lacked to make decisions on discipline matters in the classroom (see sections 6.3.1.2 and 6.4.1.1). In C4, there was a change of perspective (as shown by John's comment) and they were more focused on seeing themselves as teachers rather than student teachers. Apart from developing a sturdier identity, the PSTs demonstrated their willingness to improve their teaching practice. Luna declared that she thought that she chose her 'profession very well' and that she 'look[ed] forward to improving more and more and becoming an excellent teacher' (JC4/Luna/R1/II52–54). John wrote that: 'I always tried to do my best when teaching and I like to spend time thinking of any outcome' (JC4/John/R1/II39–40). Luna's and John's observations showed the participants' commitment to continue their preparation as future teachers. Interestingly, John mentioned 'thinking of any outcome' as part of his process to

improve his practice. This was an indication of *a*) PSTs reflecting for action (which I will discuss in the next chapter), and *b*) PSTs acknowledging the usefulness of RP in their process of learning to be teachers. Providing a more direct statement on the matter, Peter declared that ‘reflection has really helped me improve my development and activities in order to teach well’ (JC4/Peter/R1/II20–21). Laura shared a similar view:

The improvement of the class and our performance is because we are always reflecting on what did or didn’t work and we try to look for solutions to put in practice the following classes.

(JC4/Laura/R1/II33–36)

When I asked the PSTs in the GR what else they did in order to prepare as teachers and to improve, the PSTs reported that they relied on information online rather than from books in order to learn more about strategies and activities to use in the classroom. Sunny said that he tried to read but mainly to have a conversation with his peers:

[...] because sometimes the authors just talk about their context and they don’t cover our needs... most of them are not Mexican and the things [they write about] are very different here [referring to Mexico].

(GR4/Sunny/T116)

Evidently, the PSTs did not find a relation between theory and what they were experiencing in the classroom since they perceived that the authors approach a topic (not specified) in a general manner, and they focus on different contexts. This was more evidence of the PSTs’ rejection of the generalised advice they seemed to associate with theory.

6.4.1.2 Classroom management

As in previous cycles, the PSTs based their reflections on descriptions; however, their reflections provided more details about how their experience was shaping

knowledge and decisions about teaching. Lea said that 'the difference now compared to when I started my teaching practice is that I'm taking new actions in order to keep the students quiet' (JC4/Lea/R1/II28–30). She added that she had been analysing and reading about classroom discipline and that she had learned (from the readings) that 'it is important to establish rules from the very beginning, but also to follow them' (JC4/Lea/R1/II17–19). Lea's realisation of this importance derived from an event she faced (with a student who used to arrive late) and her relating what she had read on the matter to the event. Lea described that 'every time she [the student] arrived late, I reminded her that she should follow the regulation and arrive on time, but I always let her in [the classroom]' (JC4/Lea/R1/II20–25). Lea explained that after many times, she 'got tired of her attitude and implemented the rule: I didn't allow her to take the class' (JC4/Lea/R1/II26). In R2, Lea concluded that it was the right decision, even though she 'felt bad because it was the first time [she] did something like that' (JC4/Lea/R2/II32–33). Lea did not provide more details, but it seemed that the strategy implemented had worked well. Lea's peer Kimberly stated in her DJ that 'the students take the class more seriously now. I consider that it is because [...] we started to be stricter' (JC4/Kimberly/R1/II4–7). Facing these types of situations and trialling strategies to deal with them gave the PSTs the opportunity to assess the results, observe changes (in their students' behaviour), reflect on them, and make decisions or changes accordingly. Most participants described in C4 that they trialled discipline strategies and activities, and observed the effects in order to make decisions to continue using them or to implement new ones. They also showed their commitment to continue looking for more options to improve, as August commented:

Now I know how students work [...]. This does not mean that I don't have anything to improve. I still need to learn more techniques to

improve my classroom management [...] to encourage students to participate and pay more attention. I should think of appraisals.

(JC4/August/R1/II25–33)

6.4.1.3 Learners

The manner in which the participants engaged in reflecting upon their students in C4 was usually by describing the students' level of English (JC4/August/R1/II12–13,R2II2) or the PSTs' perception of students' attitudes and characteristics. The observations allowed the PSTs to better understand the classroom dynamics and their students' behaviour and skills. August, for instance, stated that 'since I know most of their personalities, I know now when they like doing things or not, based on their reactions' (JC4/August/R2/II82–85). Luna argued that:

Apart from learning about activities, I think that learning about their abilities and stages of development in mental and physical processes would really help me to know what they are capable of doing.

(JC4/Luna/R2/II1–5)

Identifying students' preferences, characteristics, and skills was helpful for them to know the type of activities they could include in their classes. Compared to the exploratory phase and C1, the PSTs had developed a learner-centred methodology. The importance of realising students' behaviour, preferences, and needs was probably derived from the PSTs' desire to become good teachers (see 6.4.1.1) and to help students' learning.

Compared to the exploratory phase and C1 in which the PSTs' reflections were mainly plain description (without providing with any details or insights), data in C4 made it evident that, in order to prompt more reflection on how to deal with their students, the PSTs were using reflective strategies such as 'sharing and getting advice from peers, authorities and experienced teachers'. Lea, for example, explained in the GR that she talked to friends who are also teachers. She said that

she 'felt relieved about the fact of knowing that I was not alone with dealing with similar situations [...]; additionally, I also got some suggestions' (GR4/Lea/T97). Interestingly, seeking for professional help was considered. August mentioned that his peer told him that in the school there was a 'teacher who helped children in special cases'. He added that:

It is important to know this [that there is special support] because they can tell us [the teachers or PSTs] if the children have problems at home, for example. Then you will be more tolerant with them in contrast to the children who are just spoilt.

(JC4/August/R1/II115–119)

Evidently, there was increasing awareness of the importance of caring about students' personal and academic welfare. August's quote confirmed that the PSTs were identifying students' personalities and characteristics in order to create a good learning environment. As Luna also remarked,

The most important thing is to make sure that students enjoy their learning and are motivated not only to learn a language but also to have a positive attitude towards school in general. [...] I believe that learning and education are very important in our society and if my students love learning and being educated, then they will grow up to be better citizens.

(JC4/Luna/R1/II20–34)

Luna's commentary above not only showed that she thought that students needed to enjoy their learning of English but also that students' well-being was necessary. The quote confirmed Luna's ethical and social values of her role and the role of education. Generally, the PSTs paid special attention to creating a motivating learning environment. Sunny shared the view in the GR and explained that for him it was important that the (university) students could see him as a friendly teacher in order to create a good rapport. He told the students that:

I could be their friend, but as soon as we start the class I am the teacher [...]. I also told them that it doesn't matter if they make mistakes because that's the way they get to learn [...]. The ones who

were not participating feel more motivated to do it now because no one will make fun of their mistakes... Well, I can see now that they feel more confident with me and their classmates.

(GR4/Sunny/T18)

Both Luna's and Sunny's opinions indicated that the PSTs tried to generate a comfortable and non-threatening learning atmosphere by having a balance between being a friend and being the teacher. This is in tune with Maynard and Furlong's (1995:12) first stage of novice teachers' development: the early idealism, which makes them feel identified with their students and that rejects being 'the older cynical teacher'.

6.4.2 Summary of findings

In this cycle, there was evidence of PSTs achieving a partial Comparative level of reflection (Jay and Johnson 2002). Regardless of still maintaining some descriptive instances, data revealed that the PSTs provided more insights showing the process of reflection they started in previous cycles that involved understanding a situation, looking for solutions, trying new strategies, evaluating the results, and changing or implementing activities and strategies based on assessment. Furthermore, the PSTs were able to reflect on their teaching practice considering different insights such as peers, students, and authorities. However, there was no evidence of PSTs drawing on theory in order to explain and understand factors involved in their teaching practice. It is worth recalling that after C3 I had re-evaluated my position regarding the theory and practice relation and I had made the decision not to force the PSTs to connect these two aspects.

The focus of reflection in C4 was on how the PSTs had developed as teachers, what they had learned about discipline strategies use, and learners' characteristics and needs in order for them to make decisions. The process of reflection

mentioned in the preceding paragraph seemed to help participants understand their teaching atmosphere for future planning. As Freeman and Johnson (1998:409) suggest, novice teachers 'studying, understanding, and learning how to negotiate the dynamics' of their environment 'is critical to constructing effective teacher education'. As in C2 and C3, personal experience was a determinant of PSTs learning to teach, giving them a sense of success and improvement, rather than relying on theory.

6.5 Cycle five (C5)

Having observed that the PSTs' reflections had reached the (partial) comparative level and that (up to this point) I had no intention to force them to relate theory and practice, as the one element necessary to complete the comparative level, the decision for C5 was to promote the subsequent level of reflection: Critical/Transformative. Taking into account that in C3 the PSTs had included some ethical and social perspectives, I considered that it might be a good idea to guide them in C5 to focus on some ethical, moral, cultural, social, and political perspectives and observe the outcomes. Therefore, for C5 I asked the PSTs to reflect upon education in our country (Mexico) from those angles. I introduced the elements aforementioned through direct questions in the DJ and the GR (see Appendix 3, Table 9 and 10). As a supporting tool and strategy for the GR, I used a movie (see Appendix 10 for a synopsis of movie) that showed problems affecting education in another country (e.g. students' economic level and social problems). My purpose with the movie was to trigger reflection from different perspectives and for the PSTs to reflect on what happens in other countries and to compare this to their own context.

Having in mind that this was the last cycle of the study, it was my intention to use this reflection as a wrap-up of the study. Therefore, I asked the participants to write a last journal entry about their teaching experience in the past year of practicum. As this was the final reflection and the term had finished, the PSTs wrote only one round of reflection and there was no interaction with me as in previous cycles.

6.5.1 Findings

The PSTs focused on responding to my questions on their socio-economic, political, and ethical perspectives concerning the education in Mexico, and on the evaluation of their (general) experience in the last year of practicum. Therefore, the focus of reflection in C5 was mainly on the teacher (self) and the status of education in our country, which I classified as Context.

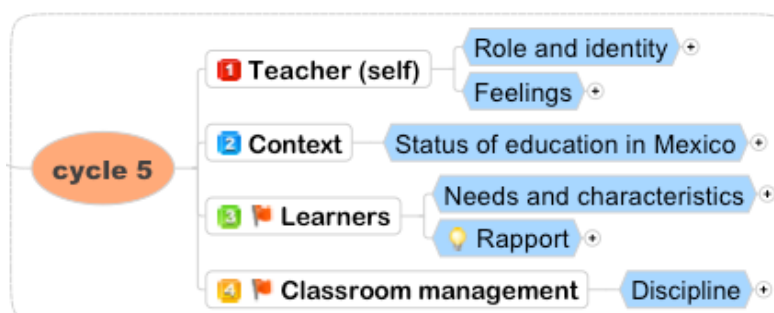


Figure 15: Themes C5

6.5.1.1 Teacher (self)

The PSTs mainly focused on how useful the teaching experience was and how they had developed their identity and role as teachers. Regarding the usefulness of the experience, the PSTs reported that they had improved their personal skills to perform in the class. For example, Laura said that:

Throughout this experience, I learned to be more confident and develop new skills [...], things that I do not normally do such as dancing, singing, playing voices, etc.

(JC5/Laura/II19–22)

As Laura reported in previous cycles, one of her aims was to improve her performance and develop a personality in order to engage and motivate students' participation. Reflecting upon their experiences and upon learning to be teachers in the past year of practicum gave the PSTs the opportunity to reflect again on how the ELM had helped them in the process. August declared that:

I really liked the experience; I have learned a lot of things in college but nothing compares to the actual experience. I had different subjects in which I learned about strategies, learning approaches, [and] materials. I must admit that I have forgotten some terms.

(JC5/August/II55–59)

As in previous cycles, the PSTs acknowledged that learning about teaching methods, strategies, and approaches was useful, but, as August's commentary showed, they were not able to relate most of the theory studied to their teaching practice. Moreover, as Laura stated, they did not receive 'enough instruction on how to deal with children nor what activities were suitable for them' (JC5/Laura/II30–32). An explanation of Laura's realisation is in agreement with what Tarone and Allwright (2005:12) suggest when they note that there are differences between the academic course content and the real situations that teachers face in the classroom and that 'set up a gap that cannot be bridged by beginning teacher learners'. Under these circumstances, the PSTs confirmed that learning from experience was most valuable:

[...] we learnt more by trialling activities; observing results, the children's behaviour, and our own performances when giving classes.

(JC5/Laura/II35–37)

In C5 there was more evidence of PSTs becoming more student-centred. They paid more attention to students learning rather than considering the financial benefit they would obtain. This was confirmation of PSTs developing stronger

responsibility and identity as teachers. Kimberly also agreed with this view and added that:

I want to be the kind of teacher who actually makes sure that students make a progress in the language. The one that does not care if she has to go back a little in order for students to really comprehend and learn a new topic. That is what I want to be, a person who makes a difference and has an influence in students.

(JC5/Kimberly/II11–17)

Similar to most participants in C5, Kimberly emphasised student learning and needs. Interestingly, by the time of C5, the PSTs reported that they had the responsibility to effect a positive impact on students by learning more about them and creating a good rapport with them. As Kimberly added later, she tried ‘to be a good person with students’ (JC5/Kimberly/II55). Feeling responsible not only for students’ learning, but also for learning about their students and creating a good learning environment was more evident during the GR in which the PSTs had the opportunity to talk about what they had watched in the movie. Peter stated that ‘it is important to notice students’ socio-economic background because with that we can have a perspective about how our students will be like, and what they are aspiring to’ (GR5/Peter/T30). Furthermore, when the PSTs were discussing the movie (the main character being a ‘temporary teacher’ and, apparently, not getting involved with students because he was going to be there for a short time), they showed their commitment to the ethical value of caring about their students. This was confirmed by Lea who said that:

I think that the same thing happened with our practice. It was a short time and it happened the way as in the film. [...] At the end, it was good to know that we were able to help students [...]. You notice that you were in the school for a month and you observe good results. As a teacher, you know you didn’t waste your time. It was worth it.

(GR5/Lea/T66)

As observed in Lea's commentary, the feeling of fulfilment was also important for them. Generally speaking, the PSTs reported they had a stronger sense of improvement in their teaching and they were aware of the implications of the profession. Luna, for instance, said that

In my teaching experience so far the most valuable thing I have learned about myself is that I have capability to be a good teacher. At first I wasn't sure if I would make a good teacher even if I really wanted to [...]. I know that there will be ups and downs but I have found a passion for this profession and I hope to keep it alive throughout the years.

(JC5/Luna/II28–35)

Luna, as was the case for most of the PSTs, developed stronger self-confidence and identity as an English teacher. Finally, apart from reflecting upon their improvement, the PSTs reflected on the importance of continuing their preparation as teachers. For instance, Lea said that she felt she needed to learn a lot about teaching and that she 'would like to attend many workshops related to education' (JC5/Lea/II64–65). In the GR, they expressed that they would like to study a 'master degree' (GR5/Lea/T138, August T140, Laura T145, Luna T151).

6.5.1.2 Context: education in México

The second theme emerged in C5 was related to the PSTs' point of view of education in Mexico. When they expressed their opinions, they mainly focused on declaring that the level of education was very low, and they also mentioned the factors influencing or provoking this low level. The reasons provided by the PSTs were from four main perspectives: structural (the curriculum), economic, political, and social. In most cases, the factors were interwoven. Laura, for instance, expressed her opinion about a structural problem in the programmes. She declared that she believed that 'education in our country has set up high standards of what

students should learn and what teachers should teach' (JC5/Laura/II1–2). She continued by saying that:

Sometimes it is okay to set up those standards because they want students to learn things considered important for their academic formation. However, people in charge of designing such programmes do not take into account many factors such as students' previous knowledge, ethnical or economical factors which definitely affect the students' learning process. Therefore, they should invest more time researching about what's the reality we are living in different schools and classrooms in order to design an appropriate programme in which students can learn effectively.

(JC5/Laura/II2–12)

Laura was aware of the unreal expectation in terms of content to be taught in schools during a school year. Her comment went beyond her position towards the amount of content. Laura emphasised the importance of creating realistic programmes based on empirical research on students' context and needs. Laura also wrote about something that was addressed by most PSTs in C5: people who design the programmes do not take into consideration various important aspects. According to John, this situation is because 'government doesn't really care, or doesn't know how to design programmes' (JC5/John/II30–31). Sunny agreed with this stance and stated that:

The problem comes from people who [...] plan them [the programmes] according to what they believe is good for students. This happens since those people have never been in front of a group; that is why they do not know what the real needs are. [...] the government wants to apply educative models that [...] are copies from other countries that have other contexts. They think those models will work out in Mexico because those ones succeed in the place they were designed initially. Moreover, government invest more money in other areas than in education.

(JC5/Sunny/II3–17)

Sunny tackled an issue that most PSTs wrote about in their reflection. Most participants attributed the low level of education to the unreal programmes in terms of (large) content, and (exclusion of) students' context and needs. Even though

they referred to the programmes themselves, they allude to the lack of knowledge of people in charge of the creation of programmes. Evidently, the PSTs' opinion was that it is the government members' (the Secretariat of Education) responsibility to design adequate programmes. Moreover, the claim could be interpreted as the government responsibility to nominate or elect people who actually know about education and curriculum design to be in charge. In the quote above, Sunny referred to one economic aspect of education: the government not investing in schools. This situation was exemplified by Lea who argued that some schools did not have essential teaching facilities and materials. Luna also stated that 'schools lack the necessary sources for quality education' (JC5/Luna/II14–15). According to Lea, 'this, without question, affects the education'.

Apart from the unreal programmes, and the lack of (political or economic) support by the government to schools, the PSTs addressed an interesting aspect of the teaching practice that contributed to the low level of education in the country: the lack of support to teachers. Although the origin of the problem was identified as a monetary problem, the PSTs acknowledged a social perspective too. John stated that 'being a teacher is one of the most important jobs; sadly, [...] teachers nowadays are not given the respect they deserve' (JC5/John/II22–25). According to John, the lack of respect was from two perspectives:

First, the teacher's salary is not according to the work they do. They receive a low salary. [...] Second, most of them are disrespected due to the bad reputation created by bad teachers who don't care for their students' learning.

(JC5/John/II3,25–27)

John did not provide more details about his statement. However, his opinion showed the PSTs' worry about teachers not having a 'well paid job' (JC5/John/II4) in our country. This might have been the reason why John previously declared that

he initially did not want to be an English teacher but an interpreter. The second point John mentioned was also approached by Lea who said that:

In our society we can observe the lack of quality education in many schools in which the teachers are not committed to do a good job. [...] This situation provokes that the students feel de-motivated because the teachers do not worry about planning a variety of activities and materials according to the students' needs.

(JC5/Lea/II13–22)

Both John and Lea highlighted the social perception of teachers in Mexico. For years, Mexican people have appreciated the accountability of good teachers in the country. However, there exists a negative opinion about those who are not committed to improve the instruction due to what most PSTs thought as a damaging attitude towards education (e.g. the lack of responsibility to update that Lea mentioned). Reflecting upon teachers' reality in Mexico made the PSTs think of their own position with respect to education and their accountability as teachers. For instance, Lea said that 'we won't always have enough support from our authorities; however, our responsibility is to do our job the best possible regardless of all the limitations' (JC5/Lea/II51–54). It was interesting to observe in the PSTs' comments that they were aware of the importance of commitment and felt responsible of generating better education and being agents to improve the quality of it. As Luna said in the DJ: 'I feel the courage to be the person who rises to mark the difference.' (JC5/Luna/II17–18).

6.5.2 Summary of findings

Data in C5 showed that the PSTs included socio-economic, political, and ethical perspectives, especially concerning the level and value of education in the country. According to Ward and McCotter (2004) this might be evidence of them reaching a Critical/Transformative level of reflection since there was personal involvement in

understanding the circumstances or factors affecting education from political, socio-economic, and ethical angles. However, most of the PSTs comments were artificial and involved what was in effect no more than an exchange of views on the aspects discussed.

Regarding the process of reflection in this cycle, this was similar to the one they started in C2 and developed in C3 and C4: the PSTs focused on their improvement as teachers (rather than classroom management or materials and activities) by first describing what aspects of their teaching they had changed. After that, they explained how the teaching experience had helped them change and improve their performance. Finally, they included realisations (the result of their evaluation) of how the ELM had or had not influenced their teaching experience. That is, the process included: describing, understanding, and evaluating. Looking for solutions and trialling were not included in this level. However, it could have been due to the foci of reflection (self and context).

Chapter Seven: Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the outcomes of an intervention that employed reflective tools and strategies. In order to maximise the chances of supporting RP, the study promoted dialogic and collaborative reflection, a non-threatening atmosphere, and an enquiry approach as values to engage the PSTs in reflection. A thematic analysis of each cycle of AR allowed me to concentrate on the effects of the intervention (RQ3) in terms of not only the focus of reflection, but also how the PSTs reflected during the study, and if there was an improvement in the level of reflection over time. Furthermore, I was able to evaluate how the reflective tools and strategies worked.

This chapter seeks to engage with those findings and to relate them to relevant literature. Additionally, I discuss the value of the guide used in order to identify and elicit levels of reflection during the intervention. In this chapter I draw on data from the final interviews with the participants and three mentor teachers at the UQRoo who, up to this point, have not been included in the analysis. Although it is unusual to incorporate in the discussion chapter data that have not been considered previously, I would like to draw on them because they offer an evaluative perspective which helps me provide an overall discussion of the significance of the intervention, especially concerning the usefulness of the values suggested. In the following sections I discuss the findings in terms of:

- ❖ Focus of reflection
- ❖ Process of reflection
- ❖ Levels of reflections
- ❖ Experiential learning
- ❖ Strategies and values to enhance reflection

7.1 Focus of reflection

From the beginning of the study, the PSTs concentrated their attention mainly on five aspects of their teaching practice: the teacher (self), classroom management, learners, lesson plan, and materials and activities. Lee and Loughran (2000) identify similar findings when conducting a study with PSTs immersed in a school-based teaching programme in Australia. Their study shows that teachers, students, content, classroom management, and pedagogy were common concerns from the beginning to the end of the study as they represent concerns that arise when teachers are conducting their practice. Ur (1999) states that these are typical aspects that student teachers focus their reflections on since they usually represent daily classroom events that are the basis of progress and development. Other studies strongly suggest that when student teachers start their teaching practice they are more teacher-centred (Graves 2009; Farrell 2008) and that they are concerned about learning how to deal with issues regarding discipline in the classroom (Numrich 1996; Sabers et al. 1991). Simonsen et al. (2009) suggest that beginning teachers are greatly concerned with practical problems, such as classroom management, during their first intensive practicum experience. Due to space constraints, in aiming to discuss each theme and sub-theme, I have provided in Appendix 11 a mind map that summarises and presents further details of each theme per cycle.

At the beginning, the reflections provided by the PSTs covered a wider range of issues. As the study progressed, the PSTs focused on fewer aspects but were able to provide more details and insights on them; that is, there was a progression on the manner in which they reflected on the various aspects of the teaching practice

(which is discussed in section 7.2). For instance, in the exploratory phase and in C1 and C2 of the study, when referring to the teacher-self, the PSTs focused on general descriptions of their feelings (positive and negative), their role and identity, awareness of own mistakes, areas of opportunity, and working with peers when reflecting on the teacher (self), whilst from C3 to C5 the focus was on their feelings of achievement and their role and identity. As it has been argued, the PSTs usually focus on dealing with their own frustrations and concerns (Borg 2009), and on trying to 'negotiate their identity' (Burns and Richards 2009:5; Miller 2009).

Regarding feelings, in the exploratory phase and C1 the PSTs' reflections were mainly descriptions of expectations and a mixture of negative and positive feelings. They compared feelings at the beginning of their teaching practice (e.g. nervousness, frustrations, and concerns) and, then, how they felt after a period of teaching (mostly characterised by achievement and success). Even though the PSTs referred mainly to positive feelings from C3 through C5, negative views (e.g. concerns and disappointment) were maintained throughout the study (from the first to the last cycle: see sections 6.1.1.1, 6.2.1.1, 6.3.1.2, 6.4.1.1 and 6.5.1.1). Most times, the feelings were related to how they managed the class and discipline problems. This is in agreement with Numrich (1996) who observes that at the beginning of the teaching practice student teachers typically report ongoing frustrations with a number of issues, such as class time, giving clear instructions, and class disruption. Hayes (2008) argues too that the process of learning to become teachers is convoluted and may be burdened with tensions and anxieties. This is why it was not surprising to find similar outcomes in a study carried out in another Mexican University (Universidad Juárez del Estado de Durango) with student teachers of a bachelor degree in ELT. In this study, Cano-Vara et al. (2013:97) found that 'the participants show a highly empathic, emotional and

personal side of the practice, mentioning in different instances their emotional reactions to different situations'. Even though Cano-Vara et al. did not mention in their report whether the PSTs centred on positive and/or negative feelings, it can be interpreted that the focus was more on negative emotions since the researchers mentioned 'contextual constraints' (pg. 97) that the PSTs faced and which triggered reflection. According to Hayes (2008:57), such tensions 'are not confined solely to the realities and immediate demands of coping with students, issues of maintaining discipline, enacting methods, using materials [...] but also extend to establish the teacher's place as relating to [...] managing one's identity [...]'. Miller (2009:177) argues that PSTs 'often face identity crises in their search to be accepted as legitimate teachers'. Data in this research showed that the PSTs tried to consolidate their identity as real teachers, given their role in the institutional context. In this study, identifying themselves as 'temporary' teachers gave the PSTs the feeling that they lacked power to make important decisions in the classroom, mainly decisions concerning discipline problems.

As observed in C1, the PSTs reported that their students did not see them as the authority in the classroom, arrived late to lessons, and avoided participation, especially when the PSTs were teaching other young teachers, some of whom were fellow classmates. This situation made the PSTs feel that they were 'not the real teachers of the subject' (GR1/Chicharito/T158). Farrell (2009:183) declares that the first year of teaching can be 'an anxiety provoking experience that involves attempting to take on an identity as a "real" teacher'. Burns and Richards (2009:5) state that teachers-learners 'negotiate their identity through the unfolding social interaction of a particular situated community, in relation to its specific activities and relationships'. As Richards (2006:37) indicates, 'identity is not the essence of personhood [...], it is an interactionally constructed representation that serves our

social needs'. Being temporary teachers (which for them meant lack of authority) caused some PSTs (John, Sunny, Luna, and Laura) to look constantly for a balance between their role as the authority in the classroom (to be respected) and also as a friendly person (to gain students' trust and motivate them to participate in the lesson). In this vein, a study by Urmston and Pennington (2008:96) shows that novice teachers stress the importance of forming good relationships with the students, and seek to 'differentiate between having a good teacher-students relationship and trying to become "friends" with the students'. According to these authors, the nearness in age might mean for the PSTs that they can sympathise with students, which sometimes results 'in conflicting perceptions of their role as teachers and near-peers' (Urmston and Pennington 2008:91). This was the case with Laura, who taught students her same age and tried to gain their sympathy and respect due to her age and familiarity with the students (as discussed in C1). Maynard and Furlong's (1995:12) research supports this argument when they state that in the first stages of teaching practice, novice teachers aim to identify with their students and reject being the 'older cynical teacher'.

From C2 there was evidence that the PSTs consolidated their identities based on their own feeling of achievement, improvement, and gaining of confidence in their teaching performance and classroom management rather than on how the students perceived them. Furthermore, they reflected on the type of teachers they wanted to be and their role in the educational system from moral, ethical, and professional perspectives (see C2 and C5). Reflecting on all those aspects and standpoints made the PSTs realise their improvement and commitment and 'start to feel as actual teacher[s]' (JC4/John/R1/II13). As Miller (2009:175) argues, identity is constantly 'co-constructed in situ' and the PSTs have a range of resources they assess as they negotiate and develop their 'identities in social and institutional

context'. Evidence showed that some of the PSTs were able to express that they identified themselves as real and committed teachers at this (final) stage of their training, but acknowledged that they needed to continue their preparation in order to improve as teachers (C3 to C5). This is understandable as a teacher's identity is viewed as a never-ending process of forming or changing (Fottland 2004) and 'is something that develops gradually over time as teacher's own education and later teaching experiences begin to accumulate' (Furness 2008:151).

Data in this study showed the various aspects of the teaching practice that the PSTs focused on, and how some changes of perspective were produced as they reflected on them (e.g. how they built their identity). All that was related to a process of reflection they engaged in.

7.2 Process of reflection

It was interesting to observe the moment and the manner that the PSTs engaged in reflection throughout the study. In this section, I summarise and discuss the occasions that the PSTs used to reflect on their practicum, and the process they developed to reflect on events happening in the classroom.

7.2.1 Reflection-on/in/for-action

After having asked the PSTs to reflect upon their previous lessons, the logical outcome was that they had to think back over events that happened during their teaching practice; that is, reflection-*on*-action was predominant during the study. As Schön observes, this reflection takes place after the teaching session and is a more conscious process. The participants in the study usually reflected on previous lessons, either in their DJs (written reflection) or during the GRs (oral reflection), as a way to analyse what happened and to try to understand why such events took

place. Most of the times, the reflection-*on*-action centred on class disruptions, activities or materials that did not work, and students misbehaving (e.g. see extracts on pages 183, 202). These kinds of reflections are similar to those identified by Griffiths and Tann (1992:78) who argue that when reflecting-*on*-action, the reflective practitioner takes time after work to review and muse over a 'particular group, or a particular child'. Additionally, these researchers state that resulting from this reflection 'existing plans for teaching and learning may be modified' or changed for improvement (Griffiths and Tann 1992:78; Zeichner and Liston 1996). This leads me to the concept of reflection-*for*-action whereby teachers become 'proactive in making commitment to improve their teaching' (Kwan and Simpson 2010:418). According to Thorsen and DeVore (2013), Rogers (2002), Hatton and Smith (1995) and Dewey (1933), reflection *on* and *for* action are cognitive activities that reflective practitioners use to analyse and evaluate phenomena in order to have a positive effect on the educational process. Most times, the PSTs trialled activities and strategies with the purpose of evaluating results and taking new actions to improve their teaching performance and students' learning (see extract on page 188, lines 14–18). Interestingly, when making decisions for improvement, the PSTs relied on what they had learned from their peers' feedback during the GRs conducted for the current study (see Luna's quotation on page 195), 'educational blogs and the internet [...], some online articles' (JC3/John/ R1/1113–14), and from observing their peers and experienced teachers (see 7.2.2 for more details). Schön (1983) states that when reflecting-*in*-action (as *for*-action), the teachers draw on their repertoire of knowledge, skills, and understanding of a situation so that they can make changes in response to pupils' needs.

Evidence of PST reflecting-*in*-action was present as well. Schön (1983, 1987) indicates that reflection-*in*-action is the reflection that happens at the moment of the class, when the teacher solves a problem he or she is facing. According to Zwozdiak-Myers (2012), reflecting-*in*-action is somehow difficult thus teachers usually reflect *on* action. Notwithstanding this alleged difficulty, data from this study showed evidence of the PSTs reflecting upon specific situations (regarding discipline and activities) in order to repair ‘on the spot’ and make immediate decisions (Griffiths and Tann 1992:78). Even though the PSTs reflected upon a past event (at the time they wrote a journal entry), which is effectively reflection-*on*-action, those reflections are in fact examples where what is being reflected on strongly indicates reflection-*in*-action too. For instance, they talked about changes they had to make during a lesson as soon as they realised that what they were doing was not working as planned (see Lea’s example on page 192).

7.2.2 Stages of reflection

As I analysed and highlighted throughout Chapter Six, the PSTs developed a process of reflection during the study. Dewey (1933) categorises five phases of thinking that an individual follows in order to reflect, with a final purpose of proving suggestions (see Figure 6 in 3.1.1 for more details): identifying and understanding the complexity of a problem, generating suggestions or ideas (from what we observe), reasoning, hypothesising, and testing. According to Dewey (1910), these processes are fundamentally linked to curiosity and orderliness in reflection, which are necessary as natural resources in thought training. These processes were evident in the current research. In the exploratory phase and in C1 the PSTs usually described events and incidents they faced (especially concerning discipline). As time went by, their reflective process included an analysis or at least a concerted effort to understand the reasons why an event happened. After that,

they figured out possible solutions, trialled or tested new or different activities and/or strategies, and evaluated results. In some cases, observations to peers and in-service teachers were included in order to obtain more ideas of possible solutions in similar situations, which involved a comparison between the observer (PST) and the teacher observed (Richards 1995). This is in agreement with Edge's (2011:19) first element of doing, which indicates that 'teacher-learners should be able to learn by *copying* experienced teachers' and become methodological. Luna provided a clear example of this process (page 188) in a reflection she shared with her peers during the GR2. In her reflection, she described a situation and then she verbalised her opinion about what generated the event. Throughout her oral reflection, she showed engagement in analysing, trying to understand, explaining what she did in order to amend the situation, evaluating results, comparing to what she observed from a peer, trying new things based on the observation, evaluating again, drawing conclusions, and making new decisions. Even though this process was present in C2 in Luna's case (and Laura's, page 188), for most PSTs it was a progressive procedure developed in later cycles; that is, most of them were basically descriptive in the first cycles, and included instances of understanding, trialling, and evaluating over time (see C3 and C4). Thorsen and DeVore (2013) argued that the process followed by the PSTs is borne out by Bloom's revised taxonomy which considers the application of the following cognitive process to the understanding of RP (adapted from Krathwohl, 2002):

Dimension of cognitive processes	Sub-dimensions
Remember:	Recognising and recalling
Understand:	Interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarising, inferring, comparing, explaining
Apply:	Executing, implementing
Analyse:	Differentiating, organising, attributing

Evaluate:	Checking, critiquing
Create:	Generating, planning, producing

Table 9: Dimensions of cognitive processes
(From Thorsen and DeVore, 2013:92, adapted from Krathwohl, 2002)

Most participants in the study engaged in these dimensions to recall and understand an event, try strategies, and evaluate results in order to generate new ideas of improvement that usually resulted in changes in their teaching practice and performance (see extracts on page 173, 175, 192, 195 as examples). That is, there was apparently a dialogic relationship between reflection and what the PSTs ended up doing in class. This was confirmed in the final group interview (GI) when the PSTs acknowledged that ‘part of the improvement has to do with reflection, but also to the constant practice and experiencing in the classroom’ (GI/Peter/T438).

7.3 Level of reflection

One of my goals in this study was to promote higher levels of reflection. According to Larrive (2008:344), it is important for teachers ‘to progress through the levels [...] to ultimately become critically reflective teachers’. As I stated in 3.2.6, it was not my intention to force the PSTs to reach the highest level during the intervention but to help them notice the benefits of becoming critical reflective practitioners. My decision was to nurture high levels but consider the PSTs’ needs (of tools and strategies), pace, and development of reflection during the study and to introduce tasks slowly. Mann and Walsh (2013:200) state that ‘if they [tasks] are too complicated, they stifle budding reflection’. The levels considered in this study were:

- ❖ Level 1: Non-reflective
- ❖ Level 2: Descriptive/Technical
- ❖ Level 3: Comparative

❖ Level 4: Critical/Transformative

Data throughout Chapter Six (analysis of the intervention phase) revealed that the PSTs moved from a Non-reflective and a partial Descriptive/Technical level (identified in the exploratory phase) to a partial Comparative level, with some instances of the Critical/Transformative level. That is, it can be claimed that there was evidence of at least moving to different levels of reflection as an effect of the intervention.

Ward and McCotter (2004) and Jay and Johnson (2002) consider both the focus and the process of enquiry to define the level of reflection. The focus of reflection refers to what the practitioners reflect upon (e.g. the students, classroom management issues), whereas the process of enquiry refers to how they engage in reflection (e.g. they ask themselves questions about what is happening in the classroom, they seek for new insights from peers, colleagues, empirical research) (see 3.2.6 for details of the guide). As explained in the literature review chapter (3.2.6), during the current study I considered a guide in which both the focus and the process of reflections were included. Thus, I would like to discuss the level reached by the PSTs from those two perspectives.

Regarding the focus of reflections, before starting the intervention, the PSTs focused on various aspects of their teaching practice in their reflective journals. They centred their attention on concerns related to tasks, students, planning, classroom management, and the teacher (self). According to Jay and Johnson (2002), this would be an indication of participants having achieved a Descriptive/Technical level. During the intervention phase, the PSTs maintained their focus of reflection on the similar kinds of concerns, but included more specific points, such as assessment of tasks, methods and approaches; more emphasis on

students' learning; and improvement in their own performance (teacher self) (as discussed and exemplified in 7.1). Moreover, they focused on the context in which they worked (e.g. status of the teaching of English in school and the panorama of education in the country) (see Appendix 11 for more details). According to the description in the guide, by including such aspects, the PSTs reached the highest level of reflection: the Critical level (Ward and McCotter 2004). At first glance, it seemed that the PSTs achieved that level; however, it was my perception that there was a contradiction with the level of enquiry (which I discuss in 7.6), given that the PSTs remained mostly descriptive when writing or talking about those topics or concerns, as I discuss in the following paragraph.

Regarding the enquiry, in C1 of the intervention the PSTs tended to provide simple descriptions of discipline problems, feelings, sequence from classes, aspects of timing, details of students' characteristics, and comments on activities and materials. The level of reflection was as illustrated in the guide, which indicates that the reflections in initial levels (Non-reflective and Descriptive/Technical) are general comments, with no further analysis of what is done or observed (Hatton and Smith 1995), and the explanation of possible reasons are based on personal interpretations (Ward and McCotter 2004). Although descriptions were maintained to the end of the study, from C2 to C5 they were used as a basis to offer more details and insights. For instance, the PSTs first described a situation and, then, they engaged in analysing possible causes of what they were dealing with in the classroom (mainly concerning discipline). They also included details on activities they trialled, and evaluated results (see 7.2.2 for process of reflection), which sometimes resulted in changes of class activities, leading them to claim improvement in many cases. Moreover, they engaged in observing their peers and homeroom teachers, and asking them for advice. Including this process of

reflection signalled that the PSTs questioned the activities they did in class and sought for new insights from various perspectives and points of view. According to Ward and McCotter (2004) and Jay and Johnson's (2002) explanation of the level, this is evidence of the PSTs having a Comparative level of reflection. However, it can be said that they did not complete the 'requirements' of the level. For them to achieve it, they needed to relate theory and practice, and make evident that changes in practices and in students' learning were based on theory and empirical research (Larrive 2008; Griffiths and Tann 1992). As I explain in 7.4, the PSTs found it difficult to link theory and practice during the study. Therefore, regarding enquiry, the PSTs could be claimed to have only a partial Comparative level.

A similar situation emerged with the critical level. In C1 and C3, the PSTs wrote about the context in their DJs. Although context might be considered an element of the highest level in the guide, the PSTs mainly provided a description of the status of the teaching of English in C1, and a brief explanation of schools not focusing particularly on issues related to students' learning in C3 (See Appendix 11). After noticing the PSTs' attempts in C1 and C3 to approach the context but maintaining a descriptive level, in the last cycle of AR of the study (C5) I decided to give the PSTs the opportunity to explore the topic from a more critical stance: I guided them to consider ethical, moral, social, cultural, and political perspectives (Ward and McCotter 2004). Interestingly (and different to the response I obtained when encouraging the theory and practice connection), when given triggering question to include those factors or perspectives, the PSTs were able to reflect on the status of education in Mexico, addressing structural, political, economic, social, and cultural factors affecting education (see 6.5.1.2). Despite being able to reflect on their context from ethical, social, and political perspectives (fundamentals of a critical level), the data in the current study did not show a change of perspective or

practice based on those angles, as Ward and McCotter (2004) suggest for this level. That is, the PSTs could reflect on context but this did not necessarily lead to changes in practice. Therefore, it can be claimed that they achieved a partial Critical/Transformative level.

Interestingly, after observing the PSTs' response to triggering questions, it can also be claimed that with the appropriate guidance or questions (which I will discuss in 7.5.2) and constant feedback, the PSTs were able to focus on the aspects they were requested. As Watts and Lawson (2009) and Moon (2005) state, student teachers go through a continuum of thinking stages that need support and careful feedback and explanation; otherwise, as established in various studies (e.g. Kwan and Simpson 2010; Watts and Lawson 2009; Larrive 2008; Ward and McCotter 2004), high levels of reflection might be hard to accomplish or, at least, it might take PSTs a longer period of time to go through these stages. As a way to summarise this section, Table 10 shows a comparison of levels before and after the intervention:

Level	Exploratory phase		Intervention phase	
	Focus (What)	Enquiry (How)	Focus (What)	Enquiry (How)
1. Non-reflective	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Descriptive/Technical	✓	Partial	✓	✓
3. Comparative	✗	✗	✓	Partial
4. Critical/Transformative	✗	✗	✓	Partial

Table 10: Comparative of levels: exploratory versus intervention phase

As Table 10 shows, it can be claimed that by the end of the study there was evidence of the PSTs moving to higher levels of reflection as a result of the intervention.

7.4 Experiential knowledge

After reading about the importance and need to be a critical reflective practitioner (e.g. Ward and McCotter 2004; Jay and Johnson 2002; Zeichner and Liston 1996; Handal and Lauvas 1987; Schön 1983; vanManen 1977; Dewey 1910), my idea at the beginning of the study was to promote and emphasise the use of theory and empirical research for the PSTs to begin 'questioning principles and theories which underpin what [they] do, and engaging in the conscious exercise of discernment as [they] provide reasons to support the judgements [they] make' (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012:39). Handal and Lauvas (1987) argue that the relation between theory and practice should be reflected before, during and after the lesson, because this reflection allows teachers to relate what they do to what theory states. However, after some attempts to ask the PSTs to make this connection (especially in C2 and C3), I realised it was a hard task for novice teachers to relate theory and practice as a manner to construct their knowledge and decision-making about teaching. This difficulty may have been due to lack of teaching experience (Bolton 2010; Gray 2007; Griffiths and Tann 1991), the lack of familiarity with teaching strategies, methods, and approaches (Bolton 2010; Griffiths and Tann 1991), and the fact that the PSTs noticed that learning by experience was more useful for them (as I exemplify later in this section). Perceiving experience as more useful than theory apparently provoked a disconnection between these two aspects. Despite the difficulty the PSTs had in relating theory and practice, there were some instances of them trying to link information from books and articles from the Internet (see extracts on pages 186 and 207 as examples). I attributed this to my insisting, especially in C2 and C3. Thus, I decided to stop asking the PSTs to do it because I wanted to avoid frustration (Gray 2007) and resistance to reflection (Bulpitt and Martin 2005), which might have made them write safely and hypothetically about

their teaching practice (Clarke 1998) and (probably) fake their reflections (Hobbs 2007) or mask them (Ross 2011). When I tried to force them to relate theory and practice, it was interesting to observe that some PSTs started to explain the reasons why they did not link them. The main cause identified by the PSTs (see extract on page 202) was that they did not find much relation between literature and what they were experiencing in class, in a context in which the language was being taught as a foreign language rather than as a second language, as most of the information in the ELM had apparently been focused on. Tarone and Allwright (2005) state that the PSTs' posture can be understood because there are differences between the academic course content and the real situations that novice teachers face in the classroom. Wallace (1991:12) clearly indicates a difference between 'received knowledge' and 'experiential knowledge' in which the former refers to the 'subjects which a trainee is expected to study [...] by any proven application to the competent practice of the profession'. Wallace (1991:12) says that 'experiential knowledge' relates to 'the professional ongoing experience' in which the trainees develop knowledge-in-action (Schön 1983) by making judgements of and reflecting on what they live in day-to-day practice.

Noticing and evaluating the existing gap between theory and practice in most of the specific situations the PSTs were facing made them focus on reflecting upon how the experience was shaping their knowledge about teaching. Findings in this regard were similar to the ones Hascher et al. (2004) identified in a study conducted in the University of Bern with 153 student teachers. Findings reported by these researchers show that student teachers differentiate between theory and experience. The participants in their study considered the theory as 'useless knowledge' compared to what they learned from experience. According to Johnson (2009, 2006), practitioners' knowledge emerges out of teacher's personal

experiences, is associated to the problems of teaching practice, and is situated in the contexts in which the problems are constructed. Hascher et al. (2004:623) state that classroom experiences 'are useful in evaluating teaching ability; support socialization; stimulate the development of teaching skills in pre-service teachers; provide a protected field for experimentations; [and] allow insights into new perspectives' (see also Jones and Vesilind 1996; Watts 1987). Having these precepts in mind, it was not surprising to discover that the participants in the current study built their knowledge about teaching and classroom management based on the manner they experienced and perceived their personal development and improvement as teachers, rather than from theory and empirical research, as I had initially expected. As Bolton (2010) argues, reflection enables teachers to learn through personal experiences on their lives at home and work. That is, received knowledge (Wallace 1991) was apparently not enough for the PSTs because 'theory is necessary but by no means sufficient' (Bamber 1987:127). As August declared in his second DJ, when referring to experience, '[theory] is very helpful but there is nothing like learning from first hand' (JC2/August/R2/II307).

The PSTs constantly reflected on how trialling activities and strategies, observing and evaluating results, and asking experienced teachers and their students were necessary for them to learn about students' needs and about what worked and what did not work, thus allowing them to make adjustments or implement new activities. Golombek (2009) and Clandinin (1992:125) describe this as 'Personal Practical Knowledge (PPK) that 'is knowledge constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them'. Boud et al. (1985) state that reflection is an important human activity in which people evoke their experience, think about it, examine it again, and evaluate it. According to Hascher et al. (2004:625), when a novice is teaching, 'he or she can learn from the reactions of

the pupils, from his/her own evaluation of success or failure [...]. He/She can learn from watching experts teach, from his/her own experiences and from discussions about teaching'. That being said, there was evidence in the current study that constructing and reconstructing knowledge were generated also from observing peers and other teachers (see extracts on pages 169, 175, 186), from whom they usually tried to copy activities and strategies. Edge (2011) makes the point that this element of professional practice (copying) is often undervalued as it is seen as traditional. Data in this study suggest that observing and copying are important for trying out new activities and reflecting on them. It can be argued then that knowledge does not involve only transferring information from educators to teachers, 'knowledge is at least partly constructed through engagement with experience, reflection and collaboration' (Mann 2005:106, citing Roberts 1998), and this engagement is with peers and learners (as well as educators). It has been established that through 'the process of observing other teachers [...] student teachers can construct, reconstruct and revise [their] own teaching' (Gebhard 2009:253; Fanselow 1988). Moreover, as Mann (2005:107, citing Freeman 2004) argues, 'knowledge is built on the teacher's experience as a learner, experiences as a teacher, understanding of theory and research, ongoing reflection on learners and their learning processes, and soliciting and acting on information from students about their own learning'.

7.5 Strategies and values to enhance reflection in the DJs and GRs

As stated in the introductory chapter (1.2), one of my goals in this study was to offer the PSTs a variety of tools and strategies that would help them support and facilitate RP (discussed in 3.2.7). Moreover, taking into account studies that indicate difficulties in engaging PSTs in reflection (e.g. Gray, 2007; Hobbs, 2007; Bulpitt and Martin, 2005), I considered it necessary to include some values to

introduce and promote RP in a new (at least for the participants in this study) and dynamic manner, in order to facilitate engagement and maintain motivation to reflect. In this section, I intend to present an evaluation of the significance of the values fostered during the current study. This appraisal will be based on my own observations as a researcher, supported by some data from PSTs' DJs and GRs, as well as the final interview in which the participants helped me assess the value of the intervention. Table 11 shows a summary of tools, strategies and values to trigger and enhance reflective thinking:

Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogic Journals (DJs) • Group reflections (GRs) • Facebook groups (FB) • Stimulated Recall (ST) • Voice recordings (VR)
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse what you did in class and think of what you would do differently is necessary • Ask for others' opinion and advice • Observe peer and in-service teachers in order to see what they do • Compare what you do to what others do • Think of alternative options to improve your lesson and your performance • Trial activities, materials, approaches, etc. so you can see what works and what does not work • Recall what you learned during the career and relate it to your practice • Analyse the alternative options you have of activities, methods, theories, etc. • Read and reflect about how to teach according to your students' age, level, needs • Analyse critically your readings • Relate what you read to what you are doing in class • When reflecting, use images, drawings, poetry, analogies, metaphors, sayings, etc. in order to represent your thoughts and reflections • Observe and analyse things involved in the process of education beyond the classroom and beyond what is obvious • Compare your teaching context to other contexts • Think about the ethical, moral, social, political and economical aspects of teaching • Watching a movie to trigger reflection
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative reflection • Dialogic reflection • Constant enquiry • Non-threatening environment

Table 11: Summary of tools, strategies and values

As I explained in the methodology chapter, the tools that worked more systematically throughout the study were the DJs and the GRs; hence, I focus on

them in this assessment. In the following sections, I discuss how the values and strategies worked in the DJs and the GRs.

7.5.1 Collaborative and dialogic reflection

According to Calderhead and Gates (1993:5), reflection involves a supportive environment that 'may only be within a culture of collaboration' (see also Zeichner and Liston 1987; Jay and Johnson 2002). Being myself convinced of the benefits of collaborative reflection and social interaction (discussed in 3.2.8), I promoted it in both the DJs and the GRs. However, despite my attempts to maintain collaboration among the PSTs in the DJs, they opted to share their journals only with me (the researcher) because they 'forgot about it' (GI/Kimberly/T139, GI/John/T159) or because 'it was more work for the other person [peer]' (GI/Luna/T149, GI/Laura/T150, GI/August/T153). As a result, collaboration with peers was mainly during the GRs and (in some instances) in the FB.

Underhill (1992) argues that working collaboratively provides the opportunity to increase self-awareness of performance, potential, and development. Green (1986:73) says that with 'no space for conversations' or 'space for engagement in diversity', it can be difficult for student teachers to discover what they do not yet know about their practice. The benefits of collaborative reflection were more evident for the PSTs in the GRs, probably because there was a sense of cooperating with a group of peers helping each other. In the final GI, I asked them if they preferred individual or collaborative reflection. They all answered that collaborative reflection was their preferred way to reflect as it had worked better for them. When I asked why they thought that, they referred to the GRs and expressed the view that working together in the sessions was very helpful to them. For instance, Laura said that she thought that participating in the GRs was 'interesting

because [...] it was an exchange of ideas and information, and we knew what was happening [to each other], so we can share solutions and strategies' (GI/Laura/T165). To this, Sunny added that 'that way we can clear our doubt about what is happening to us and understand our teaching and learn from our classmates' (GI/John/T170). Hence, social interaction and collaboration during the current study gave the PSTs the opportunity to share concerns about teaching, to receive feedback, and to get ideas for learning and improving (Kuusisaari 2014; Schneider and Watkins 1996). In this regard, it can be stated that the findings of the current study contribute to a fuller understanding of SCT (Vygotsky 1978, 1987) in Pre-service English teacher training (PRESETT) (learning through social and direct interaction with peers, ZPD, collaboration, mediation, and dialogue). Collin and Karsenti (2011:571) argue that 'verbal interaction [...] encourages pre-service teachers to verbalize their reflections on their practice and to confront and reconsider' their actions and decisions (see also Osterman and Kottkamp 2004; Jay and Johnson 2002). Other researchers refer to this as 'reflective conversations' (e.g. Crow and Smith 2005; Goodfellow 2000). This is also aligned with the value of personal narratives described by Rogers and Babinski (2002:15) who state that novice teachers' narratives in a group discussion 'do more than just assist teachers in communicating with each other; their stories provide a powerful vehicle for engaging with others, as a means to share and better understand their own practice'. According to Harris (1995:15, cited in Rogers and Babinski 2002), when we share our personal stories with others (construct personal narrative), we understand our practice and we 'make sense of our lives, and in the process, [...] make sense of who we are, have been, and might become'; that is, we shape our personal and professional identities.

Speaking with others opens the possibility to interact, understand, respond to, and exchange ideas. That is, a dialogic interaction is created. Lieberman and Miller (1984) argue that without authentic dialogue it might be complicated for novice teachers to feel that they are in a supporting environment and 'it is almost impossible for them to develop and grow' (Rogers and Babinski 2002:45). In the current study, the dialogue in the GRs was more direct and immediate than in the DJs, which usually took one to three weeks to be sent and returned. The extract on page 205 shows a good example of the usefulness and positive effect of the dialogue during the GRs. It can be observed in the conversation that the PSTs vividly interacted among them and the researcher to generate dialogic reflection, in order to make sense of experience and build collaborative knowledge (Ghaye 2011). Walsh and Mann (2015:6) argue that 'experiential knowledge is best supported by collaborative discussion' in which the participants articulate and reformulate their thoughts and ideas about their practicum for better understanding. Edge (2002a:25–30) states that by cooperating with others, teachers 'work together with equals in order to develop', and that one way of doing this is through 'articulation' that serves 'to formulate what is initially inchoate, or confused, or badly formulated' (Taylor, 1985:36). Edge (2002a:19) adds that 'we learn by speaking, by working to put our thoughts together so that someone else can understand them'. Although Edge (2002a) places special emphasis on oral articulation, Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) argue that writing journals is also seen as a tool that offers a place for articulation and exploration of beliefs and practices. Moreover, although journals are generally used to promote individual reflection, Bolton (2010), Lee (2008), Moon (1999), Brookfield (1995) and Richards (1995) have all acknowledged the usefulness of journals as an opportunity for interaction and collaboration with peers and mentors. In this regard, Bolton (2010:140) states that 'journals often inform dialogic work with supervisor, tutor or mentor'. In the DJs, the dialogue was also

created from the beginning. The PSTs usually responded directly to my questions. In most cases, second or third rounds of the DJ were considered depending on the PSTs need. That is, when I perceived that they were not providing much insight, I continued asking them questions to elicit more detailed reflection. The PSTs response to these rounds was generally immediate. Moreover, they did not only respond to my questions but also asked me questions, expressed doubts or included more comments and details for me (and I would add, for them) to understand their practice and decisions (see Appendix 4 for an example of DJs). That is, despite the time taken to respond, the dialogue in the DJs was evident. As discussed by some researchers (e.g. Bolton 2010; Williams 2001; Hancock 1999; Wong et al. 1995; Mezirow 1990), dialogue through journals is one strategy for stimulating critical reflection, by giving the opportunity to practitioners to 'question their practice' (Williams 2001:31).

Generally speaking, the dialogue in the DJs and the GRs seemed to flow easily. My observation during the intervention was that the PSTs were responding positively to the questions I included in both instruments. The usefulness of collaboration and the dialogic approach was confirmed in the GI that I conducted at the end of the study. In the interview, the PSTs stated that writing their journals using the form that I suggested to foster dialogue (see three-column form in 4.3.4, Figure 9) made them 'feel like something more natural [...] because it felt more like a conversation I was having with you [the researcher] instead of writing an essay or something like that' (GI/Luna/T31). As Lea also indicated, the conversations with her peers during the GRs made her feel that she 'was not doing a monologue' and that the sessions were 'quite helpful for me because listening to what they [peers] said made me think of my own teaching' (GI/Lea/T48). That is, it activated personal reflection, based on others' comments and experiences. As Prawat (1991) states, reflection

can be also a process of inner dialogue and 'conversation with self'. Knill and Samuels (2011) explain that with no challenge and confrontations from other's views, reflection may not lead to change of perspective and improvement of practice. Moreover, using a dialogic journal enables student teachers 'to see that feelings, issues, accomplishments, and problems about teaching are common and removes typical feelings of isolation' (Gebhard 2009:253). The usefulness of collaborative and dialogic reflection was perceived by the PSTs as an opportunity to feel accompanied in the process of reflection. Data in this study revealed that collaborative and dialogic reflection gave the PSTs the opportunity to get some response and advice that would help them develop their teaching practice. Laura indicated that 'by receiving regular feedback [...] we get involved in a good dynamic, a dynamic with a purpose of learning and improvement' (GI/Laura/T92). Interestingly, during the final GI John said that he liked the way the DJs were done because 'when you make questions, it is like you create new reflection. (GI/John/T93). This comment shows the direct relationship that the dialogic approach had with another value that involved constant questioning to the PSTs.

7.5.2 Constant enquiry

Based on the premise that questions about practice are necessary since they help in the development of teachers and student teachers, promote reflection, facilitate the creation of new ideas and the evaluation of practice (Zwozdiak-Myers 2012; Zeichner and Liston 1987), I included constant inquiry as a strategy to trigger reflection in this study. As proposed by researchers (e.g. Ur 1999; Zeichner and Liston 1996; Stenhouse 1975), some of the characteristics of an effective reflective teacher are related to the constant enquiry of their teaching practice. This may entail the examination of what happens in and outside the classroom. As Williams (2001) indicates, in order to promote reflection, the practitioners should be asked

high level or critical questions. According to this author, critical questioning promotes critical reflections through discussion and dialogue about experience, prompts 'explicit assumptions and encourage[s] learners to question the validity of the premises underlying the assumptions' (Williams 2001:31). Therefore, during the current study I continuously asked questions to funnel, probe, and elicit more reflection in both the DJs and the GRs. Moreover, the strategies to activate deeper reflection (Table 11 above) were introduced in form of awareness-raising questions. Based on the evidence of how the reflections developed in the DJs and the GRs, I would claim that this process was useful and helpful. This was confirmed in the final GI. As John stated (previous section), the PSTs considered the questions as a good aid to activate more reflection and make them focus on more specific aspects of their teaching. Lea agreed with this and said that 'if someone asks you something [...], maybe something you didn't consider before, it helps you to formulate a deeper analysis' (GI/Lea/T145). Data showed that there was a dialogic relation between the questions and reflection. For instance, in C3 I insisted on the PSTs relating theory and practice. Even though it resulted in a difficult task for them, they included some instances of this link due to my insistence. This was also evident in C5 in which I focused the questions to make the PSTs reflect of the status of education in Mexico from ethical, social, and political perspectives. It has been widely researched (e.g. Thorpe 2004; Spalding and Wilson 2002; Trotman and Kerr 2001) that by 'providing deliberate prompts and strategically posing non-judgmental questions, [...] promote higher order reflection by creating authentic dialogue' (Larrive 2008:345). The participants showed willingness (and need) to be guided on the aspects and the perspectives of their teaching practice they can reflect on. In this regard, John declared that:

When you reflect, you think: "well, I believe this or that"... but, truly, we don't know about what to reflect. So, your questions helped us

understand how and what we should reflect about. We looked at the bigger picture from different perspectives.

(GI/John/T429)

During the study, the type and the number of questions included were one of my biggest concerns because I did not want to be intrusive or overwhelm the participants (which might have led to withdrawals). I tried to consider general questions that I asked all the participants, but I also tried to be careful to ask more specific and personalised questions. Even though I had a list of questions (see Appendix 3), I preferred to follow the flow of the conversations. As a practitioner, I noticed that the type of questions worked well. The questions helped me trigger reflection and allowed me to address questions according to each PSTs' level and concern. The PSTs (apparently) did not have problem with it. As a way to monitor the usefulness and the acceptance of constant enquiry from the participants' view, I conducted three individual mid-term interviews in order to ask PSTs about it. The three participants responded that they did not feel that the number of questions was a problem. However, Sunny said that 'some questions aren't quite clear to me' and 'I don't know if I answered your questions properly or not' (MTI/Sunny/T08). Hence, during the following cycles, I tried to provide more careful support, feedback, and explanation on this matter, as Watts and Lawson (2009) and Moon (2005) suggest. In the final GI, all the participants helped me evaluate this again. They all expressed the view that they 'did not even pay attention to the amount of questions' since they saw them as part of the process for them to improve their reflections (GI/Sunny/T35). In the GI, the PSTs mainly focused on the benefits they obtained from the constant questioning (exemplified in the previous paragraph).

7.5.3 Non-threatening environment

A non-threatening environment in the current study was promoted through a relaxed atmosphere. Bassot (2013) and Edge (2002) emphasise the importance of creating an ambience of respect, empathy, trust, and good rapport. Working with others who understand what they mean when talking about teaching could provide good opportunities to receive feedback, getting ideas for improvement and learning by sharing with others (Edge 2002) (see 3.2.8 and 7.5.1 for impact of collaboration). As Hatton and Smith (1995:41) argue, it is necessary to create 'an opportunity for giving voice to one's own thinking while at the same time being heard in a sympathetic, but constructively critical way'.

In order to create a friendly environment, first of all, I told the PSTs that my primary role during the study would be that of a person who is there to guide them through the process of reflection, rather than a teacher or a researcher. It was interesting to notice that when they referred to me during the study, they used to call me 'teacher', probably because they knew that I have been a teacher/lecturer at the UQRoo for some years; however, as data showed (below), they seemed to be comfortable with my presence and manner to conduct the study. Second, I maintained an informal communication with them during the study. Examples of this were the constant use of 'happy faces' (☺), expressions of amusement (i.e. hahahaha), appraisals (i.e. good, great), and expressions of understanding and support (i.e. don't worry that is part of the process of learning, the same happened to me as a beginning teacher). Furthermore, the PSTs were asked to always show respect to their peers' comments and experience, as suggested by Bolton (2010).

During the five cycles of AR, it seemed that the PSTs felt comfortable with the friendly and informal way of exchanging reflection in their DJs and the GRs. In the

case of the DJs, it was evident that they were ‘talking’ to me while writing their reflection and responding to my comments and follow-up questions. Laura, for instance, wrote as a note for me:

Teacher: I apologise if everything is mixed up and if it is too long. I’ll write as the ideas flow and I would stop until the inspiration is over.

(JC1/Laura/R1/II1-3)

Laura’s comment suggested that, even though they had some guiding questions, the way she wrote was following a ‘free-style’. Another example of being comfortable was in the GRs, when Chicharito, for instance, thought that I was closing the session and he showed his willingness to talk more and said: ‘well, I thought we’d have [more] opportunity to talk about what we are doing and feeling’ (GR1/Chicharito/150). These types of commentaries helped me understand that the PSTs felt they were in a friendly environment and were willing to share their concerns with the group and me. When we finished the first session of the GR, I asked them ‘how have you felt about the sessions? Have you liked that we stayed here talking about your experiences and concerns?’ (GR1/Researcher/163). Laura replied jokingly ‘Chicharito finally took it off his chest!’, probably to express that the session was helpful and friendly enough to talk about concerns and personal feelings they had. When Laura added that ‘this support group is really good!’ (GR1/Laura/164&166), the entire group nodded in agreement, saying ‘yes’ (T167). The acceptance of a friendly and informal approach was confirmed in both the mid-term interview and the final interview. Laura, for instance, declared in the mid-interview that she liked the informality of the sessions (GRs) and the writings (DJs) ‘because I feel that I can write as I speak [...] and I want to express in my own words. I honestly don’t want to express myself in a very academic way because I feel that it wouldn’t be the same and I won’t say all I want to say’ (MTI/Laura/T20).

As Chicharito said, 'the environment created is a safer and more confident environment [...] it feels like when you are talking to friends' (MTI/Chicharito/T28). Regarding this, Rogers and Babinski (2002:45) state that '[i]n order for beginners teachers to develop a deeper understanding [...], there must be a safe place' for them to air their 'uncertainties and to get the kind of feedback necessary to reduce anxiety' (Lieberman and Miller 1984:14). When I asked them in the final GI if they would have preferred an academic approach, they all answered 'no' (GI/T37). Laura asked me to 'keep it real', in an amusing way (GI/Laura/T38). The responses in the GI supported the comments the three participants in the MTI made on the matter: they preferred the informal environment since they 'felt free to write and talk the way [they] felt more comfortable' (GI/Sunny/T39). Moreover, Laura added later in the GI, 'we wouldn't have paid the same attention to it [the RP]' (GI/Laura/T198). These commentaries emphasise the significance of doing reflection in an honest and adequate environment in order to generate effective reflection, as suggested by some researchers (e.g. Edge 2002a; Moon 1999; Day 1993; Underhill 1992; Handal 1990).

7.6 Use of guide

Up to this point, I have discussed the findings drawing on data provided by the PSTs' DJs and GRs as main sources. However, in this section I would like to discuss the value of the guide from my personal stance given that I used it as a supporting tool and the PSTs were not specifically informed of my use of the guide. I think it might be useful for future research with student teachers to consider the advantages and disadvantages I found during my study, from the point of view of my own professional experience.

As I touched on already, in an attempt to identify student teachers' level of reflection, and to help them in the process of scaffolding (Jay and Johnson 2002), I used a guide that considered four levels of reflection. The guide considered the focus of concern about practice per level, the corresponding process of enquiry, and the change in the teaching practice and perspective (i.e. personal, social, cultural, and political) due to the enquiry. It is worth reminding the reader that the guide resulted from a thorough review of literature on levels of reflection and it represents a merger of categorisation of levels (from Larrive 2008; Ward and McCotter 2004; Jay and Johnson 2002; Hatton and Smith 1995; van Manen 1977) and the inclusion of guiding questions to facilitate and trigger reflection (Jay and Johnson 2002) (see 3.2.6 for details). Despite the complexity in teaching reflection (Jay and Johnson 2002), I thought that the use of a guide would be very helpful as a tool (as a researcher and practitioner) to help me identify the PSTs' level and to guide them in the process of scaffolding to improve their level of reflection.

During the exploratory phase, the use of the guide did not cause a problem for me as a practitioner who aimed to only explore participants' level of reflection. It was easy to match the focus of reflection with the process of enquiry as most participants had a Non-reflective or a Descriptive/Technical level. Up to that point, descriptions of the focus and the enquiry seemed to coincide with data in the PSTs' journals. However, during the intervention phase I found some difficulties in using the guide to assess and monitor the PSTs' reflective process and development. The main problems I observed were:

1. Guiding questions were initially too general
2. Discrepancy between the focus and the process of enquiry, predominantly in the Comparative and the Critical levels.

Having guiding questions as part of the guide was really helpful for me as a practitioner. I used the questions suggested by Jay and Johnson (2002) to elicit more reflection from the PSTs and guide them to the subsequent levels. The questions were helpful in guiding the PSTs to focus on more details about their teaching practice and their experience throughout the intervention (e.g. What is happening? Is it working and for whom? What are the alternative views? How can you improve what is not working? What are the implications when viewed from ethical perspective?). Despite the usefulness of the guiding questions, I noticed that they were very general and sometimes did not apply to the specific aspects or concerns that the PSTs were reflecting upon. However, I do not consider this a major problem because I was aware that the guide was a helping tool for me to use as reference to 'providing supportive scaffolding' (Jay and Johnson 2002:84), rather than a rubric I had to follow strictly. Moreover, it did not represent any difficulty for me as the discrepancy between the focus and the enquiry of reflection that I identified during the study (which I discuss in the next paragraph). Hence, I decided to complement the guide with my own questions, which were directly related to the participants concerns and focus of reflection (e.g. why do you think that happened [referring to a specific situation the PSTs faced]?). The questions I included were also a means to promote some reflective strategies to elicit improvement in the level of reflections (see Appendix 3 for lists of questions in each cycle).

As I exemplified and explained in 7.3, I found some discrepancies between the focus and the process of enquiry. According to the information in the guide, the PSTs achieved the highest level of reflection regarding the focus. However, regarding the process of enquiry, it was observed that the PSTs completed the first two levels but showed only some instances of reflecting in a Comparative and in a

Critical/Transformative level. These differences made it difficult to determine a specific level of reflection and to make decisions on the questions and strategies I should consider in each cycle of AR, to help the PSTs to advance to the following level. In order to deal with this situation during the study, I had to make a decision on what to take into consideration in order to guide the PSTs: the focus or the enquiry? After the analysis revealed that the PSTs incorporated into their reflections most aspects considered in the guide, even for the highest level (such as the context), but maintained a descriptive level (mainly), I came to the conclusion that the focus of reflection would not determine the PSTs' level of reflection in my study.

Even though I found some difficulties in the use of the guide, I also acknowledge its usefulness, especially for inexperienced practitioners (like me) who might need some assistance to assess, promote, and facilitate higher levels of reflection with PSTs. In my experience, with the use of this tool it is possible to guide PSTs' reflection. As discussed in the literature review chapter (3.2.6), evidence of successful guidance can be observed in studies by Larrive (2008) and Jay and Johnson (2002). It is not my intention, however, to state that with the use of a guide we guarantee the improvement of PSTs' level of reflection; neither is my objective to reduce reflection to a series of steps or a 'recipe'. Furthermore, this guide intends to provide a structure to guide student teachers towards a discovery of their teaching practice intricacies through 'prompting them to think and act in new ways' (Larrive 2008). Mann and Walsh (2013:294) state that 'a structured and systematic approach is more likely to lead to a clearer understanding of both the process and the potential outcomes of reflection'. Moreover, as Whipp (2003:321) argues, '[p]rospective teachers need considerable guidance and support to think [...] about

their experiences in schools'. Based on my experience, here are some suggestions for changes to the guide used during the current study:

- * First, the focus of reflections should take into account every aspect related to the teaching practice (inside or outside the classroom, including the context) in all the levels. It would not define the level of reflection.
- * Second, the main element to determine the level of reflection and to use as a guide to encourage improvement of the level should be the process of enquiry rather than the focus of reflection.
- * Third, the theory-practice relation should be considered in the Critical level rather than the Comparative level. This might give the PSTs the opportunity to gain enough experience to be able to relate and compare theory and empirical research to their teaching practice more critically (see discussion in section 7.3). However, based on the finding in this study, one should not expect the PSTs (or novice teachers) to achieve the highest level.
- * Fourth, the guiding questions should be used as a reference for the practitioner, leaving the door open to include more questions related to the PSTs' specific needs and concerns approached during the reflection.
- * Fifth, rather than a straitjacket, the guide should be used as a formative and awareness-raising tool 'to help pre-service teachers evaluate, understand, and improve' the process and quality of reflection (Ward and McCotter 2004:255).
- * Finally, the practitioner should be aware that the PSTs might not have a definite level. In other words, they might complete a level or present only some instances corresponding to the level.

Table 12 presents the modified guide to foster and enhance student teachers' level of reflection. This can be used by mentor teachers or student teachers that seek to engage in RP:

Level	Focus (What is the focus of concern about practice)	Enquiry (What is the process of enquiry)	Guiding questions
Non-reflective (Hatton and Smith 1995)	Teacher (self): e.g. feelings, concerns, gaining recognition for personal success (including grades), improvement, development, etc	There is no enquiry at all. No need of question about personal decisions or students' behaviour or reactions to activities. Analyses are generalised and without personal response -as if analysis is done for its own sake or as if there is a distance between self and the situation.	Who are the students? What is the classroom like? What activities were developed? How long does the activity take? etc
Descriptive /Technical (Jay and Johnson 2002; Hatton and Smith 1995) (Ward and McCotter 2004; van Manen 1977)	Classroom management: e.g. discipline, giving instructions, sitting arrangement, etc. Learners: e.g. general traits (physical or psychological), needs, English level, etc.	Starts making connections between teaching issues still in a descriptive level. Recognises an important matter to be analysed, distinguishes its features, emphasises and studies causes (Jay and Johnson 2002:77). Analyses what works without values, beliefs and assumption (Larrivee 2008:342). Personally provides reasons for the situations based on personal judgments, experience or interpretations of class implied by frustration, unexpected results or exciting results, (Ward and McCotter 2004:250). There might be description of changes in the lesson and the teaching performance.	'What is happening? Is this working, and for whom? For whom is it not working? How do I know? How am I feeling? What am I pleased and/or concerned about? What do I not understand? Does this relate to any of my stated goals, and to what extent are they being met?' (Jay and Johnson 2002:77)
Comparative (Jay and Johnson 2002)	Lesson: e.g. timing, preparation of plan, changes, etc. Materials and activities: e.g. types, usefulness, what works, etc. Strategies, methods and approaches: e.g. usefulness, types, etc. Context: e.g. personal, institutional, local, national, etc.	Situated questions lead to new questions. Seeks for new insights from different perspectives and points of view from other peers, students, parents, and authorities, amongst others (Jay and Johnson 2002; Ward and McCotter 2004; Hatton and Smith 1995; Lee 2008). Expresses judgement to find solutions. Analyses facts and events with the purpose of understanding, trialling, assessing and doing things differently (Jay and Johnson 2002:77). Synthesises situated enquiry to develop new insights about teaching or learners or about personal teaching strengths and weaknesses leading to a more evident improvement of practice (Ward and McCotter 2004:250). Uses assessment and interactions with students to interpret how or in what ways students are learning in order to help them. Note: there might be some attempts to use academic terms; however there is no indication of how theory shapes practice.	What are the alternative views of what is happening? How do other people who are directly or indirectly involved describe and explain what's happening? How can I improve what's not working? If there is a goal, what are some other ways of accomplishing it? How do other people accomplish this goal? For each perspective and alternative, who is served and who is not? (Jay and Johnson 2002:77)
Critical (van Manen 1977; Hatton and Smith 1995; Jay and		The relation Theory-Practice is evident (Larrivee 2008, Griffiths and Tann 1992). Focuses on analysing empirical research and how it relates (or not) to what	What are the alternative views of what is happening? How does the research contribute to an understanding of this

Johnson 2002; Larrivee 2008) (Ward and McCotter 2004)		happens in the teaching practice. Long-term ongoing inquiry including engagement with model mentors, critical friends, critical texts, careful examination of critical incidents, and student learning. Asks hard questions that challenge personally held assumptions (Ward and McCotter 2004:250). A transformative reframing of perspective leading to fundamental change of practice (Ward and McCotter 2004:250). There is evidence of change of assumptions, beliefs and teaching objectives and practice from ethical, moral, cultural, social, political perspective.	matter? What are the implications of the matter when viewed from these [ethical, moral, political] perspectives? What is the deeper meaning of what is happening? What does this matter reveal about the moral and political dimension of schooling? How does this reflective process inform and renew my perspective? (Jay and Johnson 2002:77)
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Table 12: Guide to trigger student teachers levels of reflection.

In this chapter I have discussed the main findings of my research with the PSTs of the ELM at the UQRoo. In the next chapter, I include my conclusions, as well as the limitations and some suggestions for future research.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore the focus and level of reflection (first phase) and to observe the effects of an intervention to foster reflective practice (second phase) among the PSTs of the University of Quintana Roo, Mexico. After one term of observing and assessing the PSTs' reflections, the intervention was carried out during the last term of the PSTs teaching practice. The intervention phase was designed considering the use of various tools and strategies to trigger reflection. In addition, the researcher promoted particular values to engage the PSTs in the practice: collaborative and dialogic reflection, enquiry, and a non-threatening environment. As a way to support the promotion of levels of reflection, the researcher used a guide containing four levels, in which the focus and process of enquiry were the main elements to determine the PSTs level. All the aforementioned components (tools, strategies, and values) were deployed throughout five cycles of AR during the intervention phase, with a group of eight PSTs of the ELM. The intervention can be argued to have had positive results. The findings underpinning this conclusion are:

- a) The tools and strategies were useful for the PSTs to engage in reflection.
- b) The values promoted helped maintain PSTs engaging in reflection.
- c) The PSTs moved from a descriptive level to partial comparative and critical levels of reflection.
- d) The guide used by the researcher was useful to promote and enhance reflection.

It is worth stating that, as in the discussion chapter, I include here some data derived from the final GI to PSTs and the individual interviews carried out with the three mentor teachers of the *Teaching practice* subject. Data from the final

interviews support the evaluation of the intervention in this chapter, in which I include the contributions of the study, limitations, future research, and some concluding remarks.

8.1 Contributions:

Taking into account the core findings, I would like now to highlight the main contributions of this study:

- a) The PSTs acknowledged the **usefulness of the intervention**, for them to improve their reflections and teaching practice (as discussed in the previous chapter). This was emphasised during the final GI in which PSTs stated that they were 'grateful' that they were given the tools and strategies 'to make a better reflection' (GI/Peter/T04), because 'we realised of the options we have to reflect that we didn't know' (GI/Luna/T457). They added that the questions asked during the study 'were guiding and encouraging to notice certain aspects to take into account' about the practicum' (GI/Lea/T08) and 'helped us understand what we should be reflecting about' (GI/John/T429). Moreover, they were able to reflect on their teaching and look 'at the bigger picture from different perspectives' (GI/John/T429). That is, the intervention seemed to help them develop not only a better teaching practice or performance (Scrivener 2005; Pettis 2002; Bailey, Curtis & Nunan 2001; Murphy 2001), but also improve the reflective process itself (Ward and McCotter 2004). Interestingly, the PSTs even recommended having these types of activities as part of the *Teaching practice 1* and 2 programmes. (GI/Peter/T127, GI/August/T129).
- b) The PSTs found it beneficial to be offered the use of **various tools and strategies** during the study. They acknowledged the support of the DJs and (mainly) the GRs. In the final GI, I asked the PSTs what their favourite tools and

strategies were, as a way to evaluate the impact of these. Concerning strategies to trigger reflection, they replied that they liked all the strategies 'because they would make us think more than what we used to before [the intervention], [...] specially the real-life problems that we will face as teacher. Situations like the ones we watched in the movie' (GI/Luna/T403). Peter added that the strategies promoted (as questions) during the study 'subconsciously made us reflect on what we did [in a lesson]; made us realise that there are many other situations outside the classroom that can affect our teaching, such as the children socio-economical aspects, possible psychological problems, or the infrastructure of the schools. All that may affect the class development or the way the students learn' (GI/Peter/T427). Peter acknowledged the value of watching a movie as the triggering strategy that he liked the most. As for their preferred tool, they expressed the view that writing journals was very useful as these provided them with time to think and to pay attention to more details (GI/Kimberly/T16) and 'organise your ideas' (GI/Peter/T22), especially because they had the guiding questions to follow (GI/Luna/T27). Moreover, they appreciated the fact that they had a direct communication and constant feedback from someone to help them (the researcher), as explained and exemplified in 7.5.1. However, they emphasised that the GRs were their favourite. Some noted they 'do not enjoy writing' a journal (GI/Kimberly/T16) and expressed preference for being part of a supporting group 'to see each other and talk' (GI/August/T155). Furthermore, they perceived the GRs as 'innovative' to share in a group their experiences, and 'be able to tell what we were experiencing, and even get immediate advice from you [the researcher] and our classmates [...] It's better to share your experience here, with the people who can understand what you are doing' (GI/Lea/T172). This was a good opportunity for me to ask them about the other tools that I promoted but were not as successful as the DJ and the GR. For

instance, regarding the FB group, most PSTs said that they did not see the point of participating in it 'if we were going to get together to share our experiences and give our opinion about a certain topic' (GI/Peter/T210). John agreed, saying that:

Yes, a facebook group is useful because you can solve your doubts but, in this case, we had other activities that had priority over a facebook group. So, we didn't pay attention to it.

(GI/John/T234)

Participating systematically in the GRs and the DJs gave the PSTs the sense that they were already having the opportunity to engage in reflection with these tools, which were considered more important than the FB. The lack of value of FB in an academic situation might be related to the use of it in a more informal context. In this regard, Peter declared that FB is 'something to use for entertainment and in leisure time' (GI/Peter/T216). Hart and Steinbrecher (2011) state that PSTs interact with and use FB for a variety of academic-oriented aims. However, the use of this social networking site proved the opposite in this study. The PSTs were also open to the possibility of using other tools such as video stimulated recall and voice recording (which they were unable to use due to external and personal reasons, as previously explained). Despite the unfeasibility of more use, the PSTs were aware of the support those tools offered them. They recommended during the final GI (especially when I asked them about the use of FB) that they should be given the opportunity to choose one or two tools because they did not see a point in using various at the same time (discussed in the previous chapter). In retrospect, in this study I learned that the FB group was not a great idea because it replicated some of the discussions that the PSTs had when using other tools. Moreover, I learned that the use of more tools may prove discouraging to engaging in reflection given

that they would represent for the PSTs 'to invest more time to reflect' (GI/Peter/T22). Thus, it would have been a good idea having a balance of the range of tools with each PST to avoid overwhelming them with lots of them. Interestingly, given that all the participants knew about the stimulated recall activity and August (the only student teacher whose classes were video-recorded) had shared with them one of his videos and reflection, most participants reported that they would have liked to be video-recorded and reflected on their class based on the video (GI/Peter/T368, GI/Laura/T369). As August remarked 'the evidence is there [...]. You have the video, you can pause it or go back, and that helps you a lot because you cannot trust your memory' (GI/August/T291). Regarding the movie used as a tool in C5, the PSTs declared that they liked the activity as it allowed them observe other contexts and compare them to theirs (GI/Peter/T397). They were actually very motivated to reflect on aspects observed during the film. That is, apart from being guided with questions to focus their reflections, the PSTs acknowledged data-led (a film and a class videoed) as useful tools to elicit reflection on their own practicum. Hence, the use of various tools should be given careful consideration in terms of the number and/or the timing to introduce them to the PSTs. Furthermore, the participants should be given the opportunity to select only one or two according to their preference.

- c) ***The number of DJs and GR sessions*** was considered adequate by the PSTs. Given that for the *Teaching practice 1* class, they had to write roughly 15 journal entries, they reported that it was better to have fewer entries to give them the time to reflect on more aspects of their teaching experience (GI/John/T93). They preferred fewer journals to more and not receiving feedback from their mentor teachers (GI/Laura/T92). In this regard, the PSTs expressed appreciation for the

help received from the researcher during the study (GI/Laura/T92), and they referred to the need for constant guidance from mentor teachers because they did not know how to reflect and needed feedback on their reflections and the teaching practice (the PSTs normally hand in all their written reflections at the end of the term and receive little feedback on their progress or performance). Concerning the GRs, the PSTs remarked that they would have preferred having more sessions to cover more aspects and concerns on their practicum (GI/Laura/T187, GI/John/T189, GI/Peter/T191). This might be due to the fact that they preferred talking to writing their reflections and felt that direct contact and dialogue with their peers was more helpful for them (discussed in 7.5.1).

- d) ***The use of the DJ helped promote dialogue*** between the PSTs and the researcher. Using a DJ not only allowed the PSTs to have an opportunity to receive feedback and be challenged to think over more specific aspects of their practicum, but also allowed me (the researcher) to monitor and follow up the PSTs' development and provide caring support during the RP (Lee 2004). Having a specific column to respond to questions and to write comments was useful for both the researcher and the PSTs in order to follow a written conversation or dialogue. Representative of PSTs' feelings on the matter, Lea stated, 'I had the feeling that I was not in a monologue' (GI/Lea/T48), Peter noted 'it was like feedback sharing and you would reply or ask about our reflection, and that would nourish our teaching' (GI/Peter/T50), and Laura said 'it was easy to read and use' (GI/Laura/T55). As discussed in the previous chapter, it was important for them to have constant feedback and enquiry from the researcher. This gave them the feeling that they were being guided through the process and made them feel more confident about what to write in their journals. Despite the benefits in the promotion of dialogue of the DJs in this study (the three-column form and the constant feedback to each PST), this work involved a

great deal of time for the researcher (e.g. to ask questions, write comments and reactions to the PSTs' reflection, and wait for the PSTs' responses). Considering that as a researcher my time was devoted to this study, the time issue did not represent a problem for me; however, it now makes me evaluate the feasibility of including this type of activity in a normal term as a practitioner at my university. Teacher educators at UQRoo are involved in many activities, such as teaching two or more classes, writing academic articles, organising and attending conferences, being tutors to around thirty students in the ELM, doing research, attending meetings, and assessing homework. Therefore, it might require extra time and an increased workload for the mentor teacher to revise the DJs of 15 to 20 PSTs registered in the *Teaching practice* course (a proposal to deal with this is suggested later in this chapter).

- e) **The GRs** promoted dialogic and collaborative reflection. These allowed the PSTs to find guidance and support from both the researcher and their peers. Having direct communication was considered by the PSTs as important, useful, and innovative (as discussed and exemplified in the previous chapter).
- f) Even though the **values promoted** were presented implicitly to the PSTs (the researcher introduced them as activities without explaining each of them to the participants), there was an apparent awareness of them. The participants acknowledged during the study and (confirmed) in the final GI the usefulness of collaboration, questioning, and the dialogue fostered in both the DJs and the GRs. As for the non-threatening environment, they were directly asked about how they felt. It is quite difficult to pinpoint the grade of promotion of any particular value because they are not separated from each other; however, it can be argued that they were successful because the PSTs preferred collaborative reflection and having conversations with their peers and the researcher in an informal and friendly environment. Moreover, the use of the questions was very

helpful in guiding them to higher levels of reflection and to focus on more aspects and from various perspectives (as previously discussed). Having in mind the positive results in the current research and that engaging in reflective practice can be a difficult task, it is important to take into consideration PSTs' preferences to reflect (individually or collaboratively), and to create a non-threatening atmosphere for them to feel comfortable, but at the same time challenging them to think and say further (e.g. through questioning).

- g) The PSTs engaged in a ***process of reflection*** that involved not only the description of their practice but also the evaluation of it in order for them to understand the learners, the class, and their own teaching performance (see example on page 188). Furthermore, they made attempts to understand their context. They usually started with general descriptions of the class, but as the intervention developed, they provided more elaborate statements and insights. The process they followed, allowed them to improve their teaching practice, as they acknowledged (see section 7.2.2). This is similar to the findings in a study conducted by Akbari (2010) that revealed that the process followed by teachers' during their reflection helped them improve as teachers.
- h) The PSTs' reflections in this study showed that they ***focused on*** not only various aspects of the teaching practice (e.g. classroom management, learners, activities and materials) but also on the construction of their identity. The PSTs constantly looked for a balance in defining their identity and role, as well as in the decisions they made during their teaching practice (i.e. balancing good versus bad decisions, and what the best strategies were). This, in my view, was a great contribution since they were able to reflect on the type of teachers they wanted to be in the future (which defined their identity) and their role in education. Moreover, the PSTs in this study felt free to talk about and share something very personal, probably due to the non-threatening environment

created. There was evidence of explicit self-evaluation. Data also proved that reflection had a strong connection with PSTs' experiential knowledge and beliefs. Stories of success and gaining confidence got more frequent as they moved through their reflections. There was also, and perhaps not surprisingly, an emotional dimension to the process of reflection.

- i) During the study, it was evident that the PSTs found it difficult to **relate theory and practice**. Although many researchers (see discussion in section 7.4) emphasise the importance of doing this in order to attest a critical level of reflection, taken as a whole, the PSTs endorsed the need to build up a level of experience and familiarity before full-scale reflection can take place. Therefore, it is recommended not to force them to do it if they are not prepared to relate this.
- j) **The guide** used by the researcher to support the study was helpful (as discussed in 7.6). However, some recommendations were made (see table 12 in section 7.6) to use the guide as a supporting tool in the promotion of RP with PSTs. Having guiding questions was helpful for both the researcher (to know what to focus on according to the level to be promoted) and the PSTs (who acknowledged the usefulness of being guided). As a researcher, I got them to focus on more specific aspects of their concerns and on various perspectives to consider (observing others, getting feedback, reading about a specific topic to learn how to deal with situations, to look for more sources, to think of their students' social and economic background, etc.). By following instructions, they felt more confident about what to reflect upon and develop their opinions and beliefs during their reflections. My experience in this study taught me that some element of structure is good, and that it is necessary to start with general questions to give the PSTs the opportunity to reflect on their (personal) concerns then ask more specific questions related to such concerns. As Laura made clear in the final interview, 'we were able to talk about everything that happened to us.

It was like a therapy' (GI/Laura/T14). Additionally, August expressed that having more specific questions helped 'organise our thoughts' (GI/August/T18).

- k) Having conducted this research at the UQRoo has the potential to have some **impact** on the local context. As revealed in the second chapter, the ELM has been involved in a series of modifications to improve the Plan of Study. The possibility of including RP as part of the teaching subjects has also been on the agenda. This research has given me a better perspective on how the PSTs reflected on their teaching, negotiated demands of being teachers, and how experience helped them build a sturdier confidence about their teaching. In addition, these findings gave me a clearer idea of how to integrate RP into the programme (e.g. what the constraints are, and what is achievable in the circumstances). Results also indicated the need of PSTs to have constant support from mentor teachers in order to guide them through the process. Therefore, derived from this finding, a proposal to the ELM can be put forward in order to look for solutions to provide the PSTs with more guidance during their teaching practice. The guide resulting from my experience in this research could be used to help mentor teachers to lead the PSTs to engage in RP and funnel the process of enquiry to help them reach better levels of reflection.
- l) Even though reflection was introduced more than a century ago, and many scholars have dedicated time to define it and provide guidance to improve reflection (see 3.2.1), the number of studies that have implemented tools and strategies are limited, especially in a SLTE Mexican context. This study has furthered our understanding of what might be done in SLTE programmes and the **impact and usefulness of integrating RP in PRESETT**. To mention some of the contributions of this study in the field, there are six things that I would like to bring to light:

- ❖ RP triggers and encourages professional development from early stages, as teacher learners.
- ❖ RP gives PSTs more opportunities to focus on important aspects of their teaching practice, to understand why things happen, and to look for improvement in their practice.
- ❖ The benefits of RP might extend to developing higher levels of thinking, which would give PSTs more elements in the goal to become critical students.
- ❖ The use of different reflective tools and strategies should be promoted in order to give the PSTs the opportunity to select the one(s) they prefer and find more adequate.
- ❖ This research represents an understanding of some constraints and realities that PSTs face in their teaching practice, and how these limit or foster RP.
- ❖ Last but not least, data in this study present and represent evidence-base of PSTs experiences and life in the classroom, which makes reflection more visible, and an object of discussion and analysis.

This study embodies also a ***contribution at a personal-professional level***. For instance, it taught me to be patient with the participants' pace and progress in their reflections, especially with the theory-practice relation that I initially expected. In this regard, it showed me the importance of opening my mind and re-examining my personal beliefs regarding being a 'good reflective practitioner'. Up to the moment the research began, I had believed that a good reflective practitioner was one able to advance to the critical level of reflection, and it was my intention to lead the PSTs to that level. However, during the study, I learned that I needed to give the PSTs the time to gain experience and mature as teachers to start working towards this goal. They should not be forced to do something they are not at the necessary

stage to progress to. More importantly, it is not necessary for them to achieve a critical level of reflection because they are in the process of becoming teachers and their priorities (up to this point of their preparation) are focused on concerns about their daily practice, experience, decision-making, and their own identity. Their not achieving a critical level of reflections did not mean that they cannot be critically reflective teachers in the future.

As a researcher, conducting this study helped me pay attention to the PSTs' needs, preferences, and progress in order to decide on subsequent steps or actions in each cycle implemented. For instance, as the person guiding the GR sessions, I had to control my impetus to interrupt the participants' articulation in order to let them fully express their opinions. At the same time, I needed to pay attention to PSTs' responses in order to ask follow-up and probing questions (Bell 2010; Richards 2003) to guide the session and give it the fluency needed to encourage the PSTs' reflections. Another lesson I learned during this study was that I had to be very systematic in my research journal writing and the analysis of data (both during and after the intervention). Being systematic was very useful for me to organise data as it emerged, to reflect and evaluate, and to make decisions about every step I needed to take. It was also interesting to see how I tried to define my own identity during the study. Being a lecturer for many years at the university where the study was conducted caused me to struggle as a researcher and as a teacher trainer. Apparently, my role as a teachers' educator was always there during the study; always trying to see the participants as my students, the ones I wanted to help and make them learn the benefits of RP. I also intended to be their mentor teacher, who supported them in their teaching practice experience, especially because they did not have any sessions with their mentor teachers of the *Teaching practice* subject to discuss their teaching experience. On the other

hand, I also had the role of a researcher collecting and analysing data for the sake of this thesis. In the end, I had to separate my two roles, and identify myself as a researcher (rather than a teacher educator) to maintain objectivity in my analysis to successfully carry out the research.

8.2 Limitations

Despite the contributions described in 8.1, there were some limitations in this study.

- a) Lack of time was the main limitation. One of my aims was to carry out a series of workshops in order to introduce the reflective tools and strategies. However, due to the various activities in which the PSTs were involved during the last term of studies, they did not have time for us to meet for this purpose. Lack of time also limited more PSTs' participation as they reported in a short questionnaire at the end of the study. Thirteen respondents (who initially signed consent to be part of the intervention but did not do it at the end) indicated that they had not participated in the study because they did not have time to attend the GRs and write a journal due to the various activities they had to do during the last year of studies (e.g. writing a thesis, working part time, doing social service). Attending the GRs was time consuming for the PSTs as it was an extra activity. Regarding this, they recommended having the sessions as part of the *Teaching practice* subject (GI/Peter/T204).
- b) Another limitation faced during the study, was the impossibility of having more PSTs participate in the stimulated recall activity. The difficulty of gaining permission from public and private institutions was the main reason here. Hence, it would be recommendable to persuade the schools (where PSTs of the UQRoo do their practicum) of the benefit of stimulated recall in the student teachers' development and understanding of their practice. Moreover, it would

be favourable to create in my city a 'culture of trust' in research, since the main reason the institutions provided was that they wanted to protect the children's identity, and to avoid exposing them in a video. People in Mexico usually do not believe that the children will be protected and the video would be used for research purposes only.

8.3 Future research

I consider the current study only the beginning of an investigation of the impact of RP, especially in my near context. Hence, there is a great deal of further research that can be done. Recommendations of research that might provide a better understanding of the benefits of RP to the student teachers and the mentor teachers might be:

Recommendation	Example
1. Further research to observe how the modified guide works with other PSTs and with in-service teachers.	Does the guide work better with the modifications? Is there significant difference between pre-service teachers reflections compared to in-service teachers reflections? Does experience foster more reflection or a different type of reflection?
2. Research on how more individual reflective tools work	<i>Facebook, Moodle</i> , or another platform, (use of) movies, voice recording, email, chat-rooms. How do they work? Are there any constraints?
3. Further research on video stimulated recall with PSTs	To observe how the video stimulated recall supports the PSTs' understanding of teaching.
4. Discourse analysis of group reflections	How dialogue develops? How is interaction among participants? How is interaction promoted? How collaborative reflection works? How do PSTs develop RP in a group? Do collaborative conversations lead to PSTs' inner dialogue? What are the benefits of GRs?
5. How emotions are involved and influence the PSTs' RP	To observe if there is a change of emotions over time.
6. Further research on the process and focus of reflection	How it develops; how it develops in a different context and compare to this study; how it develops with in-service teachers (is it similar or different? Do they focus on same aspects? How do they identify themselves and their roles?)
7. Mentor teachers' role in the	What do mentors think about their role? What do

promotion of RP

PSTs perceive the help? How can mentors help in the promotion of RP or support during the teaching practice?

8.4 Concluding remarks

Conducting an AR study gave me the opportunity to implement a plan and evaluate the results, and, most importantly, to help a group of PSTs improve their RP. Since I was able to include five cycles of AR, each cycle provided opportunities to reflect on the results and modify, adapt, add, or step back in order to improve the subsequent cycle. The cycles of AR included in this study were sufficient to increase awareness in the PSTs of the importance and usefulness of RP. The diverse methods used to collect data (observations, focus groups, individual interviews, group interviews, journals) proved to work well to engage in reflection, evaluate PSTs' level, and observe their process of reflection.

The importance of introducing RP at an early stage, when student teachers are being educated, has been addressed by a number of researchers (see 3.2.9 for references). The usefulness of introducing RP to PSTs in the UQRoo was also highlighted in this study by the mentor teachers in charge of the *Teaching practice* subject of the ELM. They stated that 'it would help them [the PSTs] to be curious enough to look for more information about teaching from various sources' (MT/Gabrielle/T44), and it 'is a kind of self-assessment that is useful to focus on what they did and how it worked, what didn't work [...] how much they have learned and changed' (MT/Alice/T32). Wendy mentioned more benefits, such as 'the ability to think about themselves as teachers, their personal and professional development [...]. Reflection also helps them think critically about the daily challenges they face, helping them understand why things happen [...], it gives them tools to create a solution to solve a problem' (MT/Wendy/T27). Moreover, 'I

believe that it is a way they will develop responsibility and self-awareness and, at the same time, they build their own identity as English teachers' (MT/Wendy/T29). There was special emphasis on the mentor teachers view that it should be introduced in an early term of the ELM to help the PSTs develop and improve their reflections. They stated that 'it would be a good idea to teach them when they start the methodology subject [seventh term]' (MT/Gabrielle/T40) or 'even from the beginning of the career' (MT/Alice/T36), 'in all subjects, not only the ones that are part of the teaching training' (MT/Wendy/T31). It is important to note that the mentor teachers' willingness to trigger the PSTs reflections is a key aspect to consider. However, due to the number of students doing their practicum, asking only three mentor teachers to read weekly reports and observe classes in order to provide feedback to fifteen to twenty PSTs per group may require a lot of time. If we aim to implement RP in the ELM and make it less time consuming for three mentors (as I commented in 8.1, section d), it is necessary to have more academic staff involved to help with this duty because 'it's a lot of time we [mentor teachers] need to invest to follow up their [student teachers] reflections' (MT/Wendy/T39). Another important aspect to consider for the implementation of RP in the ELM is related to the evaluation of PSTs' reflections. Even though some of the PSTs who did not participate in the study (but answered the final questionnaire) indicated that the reflections should be part of their grade of the subject for them to feel obliged to write the journals (FQ/S12/q2, FQ/S13/q2), it might be necessary to consider not giving a grade or assessing reflection if there is an intention to promote RP with no restraints (see, for instance, studies by Hobbs 2007, Hargreaves 2004, Halback 2002, and Stierer 2002). As Sunny emphasised in the final GI, 'I personally felt free since I knew I wasn't getting a grade for this, I felt free to write the way I wanted to (GI/Sunny/39). To this, Peter added that 'if the written reflection were part of my grade in a subject, I'd feel a lot more pressured and even worried because there

would be things that I shouldn't have done' (GI/Peter/43). In the end, it is necessary to make PSTs aware of the benefits of reflecting, and take advantage of their willingness to participate, learn, and improve their practice. Calderhead (1989:9) states that 'we may develop an improved understanding of the nature and potential of reflection'. One of the things I tried to do in this study was to represent the voice of the participants. Being faithful to this, I would like to give the participants the final word on the impact the study had on them. Lea summarised this in the final group interview:

[Talking to the researcher] I think your research was really useful. For example, I think the [group] sessions were entirely useful. They were worth the time. Before this [intervention], I hadn't considered the opportunity to come here, I didn't even know the importance of reflecting on my lessons and learn about the things I do during class and the impact they have on the class and students. It also helped me to have a team who all of a sudden told me suggestions about what to do, and activities that I hadn't planned before [...]. Helping each other helped us improve ourselves, especially now that we are going to be teaching on our own... For me it was extremely useful.

(GI/Lea/T517)

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of observations (sample)

SESSION	GROUP 1		GROUP 2	
	TOPICS	COMMENTS	TOPICS	COMMENTS
1 31/08/13 9:45 & 11:50 (After my introduction to the first phase)	- Motivation - Kind of teachers and their role in the classroom. - Observing other teachers (how, when, what)	During the time I observed, PSTs show excitement when sharing opinions, in a relaxed way. Sometimes I was not able to hear everyone so I tried to focus my attention to those close to me. I could observe how seriously some of them were talking about the various topics (in groups of four). However, when there was a time for them to share their thought with the whole group, only two or three of them participated. Only when talking about motivation they provided personal examples, relating the topic to personal experience and family experience. As for the rest of the themes, it was basically the teacher giving information, with no interaction on the students' part (although it seemed by their reactions, they were paying attention and relating (in their minds) the topic to a previous experience). Only when working in groups, students share their thought about the topic in discussion, but based on what I would hear, they were only 'reporting' or repeating what they read about it (the teacher had sent them in advance the readings and asked them to read them for the class), not critically analysing the content of the readings.	- Observations (what and how)	Combination of individual, pair, and group work. Only three or four students (always the same ones) shared their ideas and based-on-personal-experiences opinion with the group. Compared to the first group, I could notice that more questions and reflection were elicited (from the teacher) but PSTs mainly reported their readings, avoiding personal opinions at the beginning. There were aspects easy for them to relate to their previous knowledge on the topic, but only a few of them expressed their thoughts. PSTs 'analysis' on the topic was only repeating or reporting what they had read recently from readings or their teacher's presentation.
	- How to teach Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Vocabulary, Grammar, and Pronunciation.	Students were asked to discuss the reading (one topic/skill per group) and had to write a report of what they understood, and finally present it in front of the class. Most of the teams/students were actually reading there, right at that moment, when they were supposed to do it for homework. Apparently, from what I was able to hear, they do not seem to relate the reading to	- Sharing experience on observing teachers - Types of teachers and learners	Most PSTs reported that they were not able to observe any teacher because of some public schools' strikes in some states of the Mexican Republic! Only a few observed teachers in private schools. This, for me, would have been a great opportunity to reflect and generate discussion on the situation that teachers in our country are

what they know about the topic. Generally speaking, they basically reported or reproduced the reading. There is a group in which one girl was leading the discussion and the rest of the group was only asking her questions and taking notes but not actually sharing their opinions. While presenting their summary (and the teacher eliciting reflection on the topic), only one student talked about his experience when developing skill and subskill and what he observed from other students; he also provided examples and related the author's ideas to hypothetical situations they may face as teachers. He showed engagement when asking questions to the teacher about things that were not clear for him. The teacher's attempt to elicit reflection did not work. PSTs did not show interest. I wonder if it is because of the time and the day.

facing, but it did not happen. PSTs who observed shared their experience to enter schools and approach teachers to be observed. Their mentor teacher asked them about teaching techniques observed, to which PSTs responded with a description of the activities. One student mentioned about the activity she observed and she said she would like to do it in the future. As for the second, and core topic of the day, PSTs were more enthusiastic to participate and provide personal opinions. I think it was because the teacher actually asked them to share their experience with teachers they have had in life and to mention what they loved and hated from those teachers. Themes such as the methodology used, techniques, the use of a variety of activities, and motivation or the lack of it emerged. This activity led them to reflect on what being a good and a bad teacher means. This also provoked their mentor teacher to ask them to relate educational theories to the way teachers work, the type of activities, etc., but PSTs were not able to remember the theories (which caused a big reprimand from the teacher's side and the recommendation to re-read and analyse some theories). As long as the task was not related to some theory, the activities and interaction worked well and students were able to share personal opinions based on personal experiences.

Appendix 2: Initial questionnaire (sample)



QUESTIONNAIRE Centre for Applied Linguistics Researcher: Floricely Dzay Chulim

The aim of this questionnaire is to know your opinion about **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**. Please, answer the questions and provide as much information as you can. This is not a test nor does it attempt to evaluate your knowledge on the topic. Remember that the responses you write here will be absolutely confidential and serve only for research purposes.

1. Do you think it is important to reflect on your teaching practice? Explain.

Yes, (even though I don't do it). It is important because with that you can improve ^{yourself} and be better next time in your teaching practice.

2. In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of reflective practice?

Maybe you will feel disappointed about the class that you did and will feel bad the next time you are in front of a class.

3. How do you think reflective practice should be accomplished, individually, or by sharing your experience with someone else, or both? Explain why

I think should be by sharing your experience with someone else because he might give you some feedback or suggestion to improve your class.

4. What kind of helping tools (e.g. a teacher's diary) and strategies (e.g. talking to a peer) do you think you need in order to reflect?

It is better a teacher's diary because you can see your own lesson plan and then read what you did or miss about it.

5. Do you ever reflect on your teaching practice?

☒ Yes

☐ No

If your response is affirmative please answer the following questions.

6. When do you usually do it? (Put a tick (✓) depending on your case. You can choose more than one option)

☐ Before the class?
☐ During the class?
☒ Immediately after my lesson/class?
☐ When I go home?
☐ At some other time? When? _____

7. How long does your reflection usually last (roughly)?

About 10 minutes when my classmate is telling me my faults and what I did good.

8. Do you reflect (Put a tick (✓) depending on your case. You can choose more than one option)

☐ Individually?
☒ With another person (a classmate, a friend, a teacher)?
☐ With a group of people?

9. Are your reflections systematic or occasionally? Describe how you do them (process) and what you use to help yourself (materials).

they are occasionally because sometimes I don't have the time to do it.

10. What aspects of teaching do you pay attention to while you reflect (about your own teaching or someone else's)?

Both. Because I listen what my classmate is telling me and then I do a reflection about what I did. I pay specially attention in the discipline (because they are kids) and the main activity.

11. Would you say that the time you spend reflecting about your teaching is productive or unproductive? Why would you say that?

It's very productive because it's very helpful for me.

Thank you!



Appendix 3: Questions per cycle

Table 1: questions for DJ, Cycle 1

Initial reflection	First round of questions	Second and third round of questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What did you like of the experience? •What did not you like? •What did you learn? •Did you notice any difference among the various levels/ages you taught? •What aspects of the teaching practice called your attention? 	<p>Follow-up questions: For this first cycle, I did not have a list of questions to be included since they would depend on what the PSTs expressed in their initial reflection. Some of the questions that resulted were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What do you mean by ____? •How did that make you feel? •Why do you think that happened? •Tell me some specific examples. •What is the most important thing that you learned about this? •What was the most challenging aspect of working with kids/teens/adults? •What else would you like to learn about the topic/process? <p>The specific questions and themes were defined by the PSTs responses.</p>	<p>Follow-up questions: they would depend on what they replied from previous questions. Some of the questions that came up were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do you think it is because of x? •How are you planning to improve this? •What do you think you need to do in order to learn more about X? •So, what is important for the students then? <p>As for round one, the specific questions and themes were defined by the PSTs responses.</p>

Table 2: questions for GR, Cycle 1

Initial questions	Follow-up questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •In general, how did you feel during your teaching practice last term? •What did you enjoy the most/least? •What was your biggest concern during your teaching practice? •In your personal opinion, what was the biggest accomplishment? •Would you do something differently now? What would you change? •How did you feel when something went wrong? And when went right? •What did you learn about yourself and about your students? •Is there anything that called your attention during your teaching practice? What was that? Why? 	<p>Some of the follow-up questions that arose out of the process were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Is there something else you would like to add? •What do you mean by that? •X mentioned that (something) calls his/her attention, was it the same for all of you? •Tell me more about that •How did you achieve that? •What did you do, exactly? Why? •What would you have done instead/differently? •What did you learn from that experience? •Do you agree with X? •When you say X, do you mean that X? •Why do you think that happened? •How did that affect you (personally and professionally)?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that was a good decision back to that moment?
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Table 3: questions for DJ, Cycle 2

Initial reflection	First round of questions	Second and third round of questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you prepare yourself for this new teaching experience? • How did you feel this first week? • What were your expectations (personal and professional) before your first class? Were they fulfilled? • What aspects did you take into account when planning your lesson? • Did you have a personal goal for your class? Did you achieve it? • What worked and what did not work? Why do you think that happened? • How did you know that something worked or not? • What did you do to make things working (when they did not work)? • Was there something that you did not understand? • Did you achieve your class goals? Why? Why not? • Is there something that you think you need to improve for the next class? What is it? How are you planning to improve? 	<p>Follow-up questions: For this first cycle, I had a list of questions to be included, but I also asked questions depending on what the PSTs expressed in their initial reflection. Some of the questions were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you pay attention to in order to learn more about the students? • What kind of information do you need to know/learn about your students in order to plan or improve your class? • What else (inside or outside the classroom) do you pay attention to? What other kind of situation do we need to be aware of when teaching? • How do you relate your previous knowledge (from books, articles, discussions in class) to your actual teaching practice? How is that previous knowledge helping you? • Have you asked other teacher(s) about how to manage different situations (real or hypothetical)? • How is your previous knowledge on the topic (from books, articles, etc) helping you with this experience? • What else do you do in order to prepare yourself as a teacher and to be able to improve your class? 	<p>Follow-up questions: they would depend on what they replied from previous questions. Some of the questions that came up were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you planning to improve this? • What do you think you need to do in order to learn more about X? • So, what is important for the students then? • How do you deal with that type of students? • Consider what experts say about the topic • What has been the most useful information you have found in the articles, internet? • Why do you think it was different now? • How did you learn that? (e.g. that the activity was correct for Ss) • What exactly do you mean? • What would you have done differently? • What happened? How did that work? • How did you react to the changes? How did changes affect your lesson?

Table 4: questions for GR, Cycle 2

Initial questions	Follow-up questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, how did you feel during your teaching practice? • Did everything worked as planned? • What worked and what did not work? How did you know? • Did you do something different from the first time you taught last term? Why? 	<p>Some of the follow-up questions that arose out of the process were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there something else you would like to add? • What do you mean by that? • Tell me more about that

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In our first FG session, I asked you to think about the importance of knowing our students, what have you learned and search about them so far in order to plan you class or teach them? • In your experience, what do you need to know about your students in order to feel more confidence to teach? • To what extend do you think it is important to take into account the students characteristics, the type of school, the socio-economical situation, and the context of the institution? • What other ways do you know to learn more about how to teach children/teens? • Do you usually ask other teachers or experts for advise? What do you do with that information? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you do, exactly? Why? • What would you have done instead/differently? • What did you do differently that worked better? • What do you all think about that situation? • What did you learn from that experience? • Do you agree with X? • When you say X, do you mean that X? • Did (x) work better? Why do you think that happened? • What made you take that decision? • What have you learned so far? • How do you feel about that? • Do you pay much attention to your Ss reaction? Why?
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Table 5: questions for DJ, Cycle 3

Initial reflection	First round of questions	Second and third round of questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about your teaching during these weeks and tell me about things that have caught your attention, and/or situations that you need to deal with, and/or things that you do every class. • Then recall something you read about the same situations during the last terms of the degree/major (something that you had to read for Teaching methods, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Technology, Materials, Design, Teaching practice I –for instance-, or something you read and discussed in class, or something you found on the internet, etc). • Now, write about it: describe or explain the situations and mention how those reading(s) or themes are related (or not) to what you are experiencing or facing in your practice 	<p>Follow-up questions: questions depended on what the PSTs expressed in their initial reflection. Some of the questions were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you agree with the author? Why? Do you think the author was right? Why would you say that? • How is your school context related (or not) to the one described by the author? • How do you relate or adapt what the author say to your own specific context? How would you use that information to be useful in your own teaching? What would you take from the author and what wouldn't you take and Why? How do you decide on what to take or not from these or other authors and proposals? • How do you agree with this? or you just do it because this is something that was said in your class? Wouldn't it be easier just to follow the book, or the syllabus, or what other teachers say or ask you to do? • Which one(s) [ideas, methods, approaches, etc.] did you use? Which one(s) are you using now? How are they different? Why is the current one(s) 	<p>Follow-up questions: they would depend on what they replied from previous questions. Some of the questions that came up were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been the most meaningful information that you have found so far? • What have you research about that? • When you are planning your class, what do you base it on? Previous literature? Something you observe during your classes? Following intuition? • What do you mean by [context]? • What other factors do you mean? • How did you feel about that? • Why do you think X happens? • Have you thought about other options? • What do you think that you can do in order to help yourself in that specific situation? • Whose responsibility do

	<p>working better? Do you think you need to adopt or adapt another one?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you had the opportunity to read articles/research/studies about how to teach English as a foreign language to Kids? • Now that you are trialling activities, materials, etc., How do you feel about using or relating different methods and approaches to your teaching? I am thinking, for instance, of Total physical response, suggestopedia, etc. Do you think they might work? 	<p>you think it is? Students? Teachers? Institution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you tried it the other way? How has it worked? •
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Table 6: questions for GR, Cycle 3

Initial questions	Follow-up questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you felt during these weeks with your new groups? How are things going on? • What situations have to been able to manage better? • Is there anything that is concerning since you started your teaching practice up to now? • What (else) have you learned about your students in the last days? What about the school? And the students' families? • How have you been relating what you learned in previous subjects to what you are doing now in your teaching practice? Have you used information read or learned during those subjects? • Have you included any new strategy/method/approach with the students since our previous reflection? How has it worked? • How can you say when something worked or not? • How do you evaluate your objectives? • How can you improve something that is not working? • How do you feel with your own performance as teachers? • Which do you think are your areas of opportunity and your strengths as teachers so far? • What do you think you need to learn? How do think you can prepare yourself to improve and learn more about teaching? • How do you see yourself in the future? 	<p>Some of the follow-up questions that arose out of the process were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything triggering that reaction on students? • Have you asked other teachers or experts why that happens? • Have you noticed any change? • Are you having better results now? • What do you think about that situation? Do you agree? Disagree? Why? • What would you do in a similar situation? • Do you think that what you are doing now reflects what you learned (theory) during the major? • Considering that during the major you were not provided with all the strategies to teach children (for example), what do you think you can do to improve in this area? What are you doing to learn more about this? • Is there something else that you have learned from past subjects?

Table 7: questions for DJ, Cycle 4

Initial reflection	First round of questions	Second and third round of questions
<p>Think about your teaching experience in the past two weeks and compare your most recent classes with the ones at the beginning of this semester:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Have you noticed any significant change? How? In what aspects? Why do you think that happened (if it changed or not)? •What do you do now (while planning your class, while teaching) that you didn't use to do, or viceversa? 	<p>Follow-up questions: questions depended on what the PSTs expressed in their initial reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do you think you have improved your teaching practice? Why do you think that happened? •What is the most important thing for you when you are teaching? Becoming a good teacher (in terms of performance in the classroom)? Helping students not only in an academic level but also (maybe) in a personal level? Etc. •Apart from the information related to the kind of activities that students enjoy and are more useful for their learning, what other things do you think you should learn about your students? I mean something that might affect (in a positive or negative way) their learning or the sequence and successful of the class. •What aspects of the teaching practice do you pay attention to now that you have more experience (that you didn't before)? •Do you think you have changed your personality? How? Why? •How do you think your strategies would work with a different group? •Why do you think your students act/react as they do (in a specific situation)? •How has X situation helped you? 	<p>Some of the questions that came up were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Why do you think Respect is important? •Why do you think your students are behaving better? •How have your students reacted to the values you are trying to teach? •Why did you think you had to do X? •How did the result make you feel? •How did it work? •Was it useful for your students? •What was the students' reaction to that? •Has X been easy/difficult for you? •Why is X important to you? •What has been the most difficult when trying to pay attention to all the children? •How has your opinion/belief changed? •What do you do now that you did not use to do before? •How do you think you can continue your professional development? •What do you mean by [teaching]?

Table 8: questions for GR, Cycle 4

Initial questions	Follow-up questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How have you felt so far? •Is there any new event or situation you have faced recently? •What do you think has changed in you since you started your observations and teaching practice? 	<p>Some of the follow-up questions that arose out of the process were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How has the rapport changed or modified? •Do you think the students learn better that way?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Have you changed your mind regarding any aspect of your teaching practice? Beliefs? Behaviour? •Have you faced any other special situation? Which one? •At any point of your teaching (before, while or after) have you used anything that you read about lesson planning, activities, materials, how to work with children or adolescents or adults? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Have you made changes to your lesson plans, depending on students' reaction to activities? •Do you analyse afterwards the changes you made in-action? •Do you think you have become more critical? •Have you researched about the working situation of teachers in your school? •How do you keep preparing yourselves to be better teachers?
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Table 9: questions for DJ, Cycle 5


<p>For this fifth and last written reflection, please tell me:</p> <p>Taking into account your experience as a university student and as a pre-service teacher the last year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your opinion about Education in our country, especially in our state? Not just about teaching English as a foreign language but also education in general. Explain your opinion or stance from an ethical, moral, social, economical, and political perspective. <p>Also, tell me about your personal experience as an English teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the most valuable thing you learned about YOU and about your students? Not only from your teaching practice but also from what you learned in school (university), from the various subjects related to your training as a teacher. - What things have changed from the beginning of your practice to now, in terms of your training as a teacher? (e.g. your classroom management, your beliefs about students and classes, your performance as a teacher, etc) - Why do you think you have changed (if so)?
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Table 10: questions for GR, Cycle 5

Initial questions	Follow-up questions
<p>Based on (an extract of) the movie we watched, please reflect about it and tell me:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What called your attention? •Do you think that we can find the same type of situations in our context? •What similarities and differences can you see with our schools in Mexico, the state or the city we live? •What would you do in similar situations? •What is our role as teachers in similar situations? •Nowadays, as part of the curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on teacher values, What do you think about that? What is your position? •How are values taught in Mexican schools? •How involved are you with students' learning and personal lives? And what about the intuition? •Do you think it is important to get involved? Why? <p>Given that this is our last session, I would like</p>	<p>Some of the follow-up questions that arose out of the process were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do you think that students should notice or know that we (teachers) are having a bad day? Why? •By the end of extract we watched there was a change of attitude on the students, why do you think that was? How was it related to the school and teacher? •Why do you think it is important to learn about students' background (academic, social, economic, etc.) according to what you watched in the movie? According to your own experience? •What happens if the students do not want you to intervene or learn more about them? •What other parts of the movie did you find appealing to you? Was there any part that made you think about yourself? •Are you planning to continue your development as teachers? Why? •Is there anything else you would like to add?

<p>to know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What have you learned from this year of teaching experience? What has been the most significant learning? •Have you experienced changes in the way you teach now? •What are your future expectations and plans? •What kind of teachers would you like to be? 	
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Appendix 4: Dialogic journal (sample)

REFLECTION	QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS	RESPONSES
<p>I was scared and nervous the first day we went to the CENDI even though I wouldn't give the class, since most of the comments we heard about those children were about how difficult it was to control them. I was aware that the first class wouldn't be easy.</p> <p>It is important to mention that I totally refused to give the very first class as I wanted to know the kids first and detect some problems that could arise during our class. Thus, I would have a better idea of what I would be facing for my class and the following months. It did work actually. I noticed who the problematic kids were, the students' reactions about all the activities and what kind of problems could happen in the classroom. All that helped me to design my lesson.</p> <p>For my 1st class in which I had to teach the classroom commands, I decided to do activities in which the children had to move a lot because I noticed they like to participate. Moreover, I knew for sure that I had to grab their attention since the beginning; consequently, I thought in bringing a huge teddy bear to the classroom to use it as a puppet to do the classroom commands. Also, I wasn't sure if they would be distracted by how big and cute the bear was or if they would pay attention to the activity. But I wanted to try anyway. Additionally, I had the discipline strategy we had agreed on, which was telling the children that we will give them a star if they were paying attention and quiet, and the one in which I have to tell the children: Class, class, class, and they have to respond: Yes, yes, yes!. I was really surprised and happy</p>	<p>⇒ Good strategy! And what about now? Have you planned observing the kids in order to detect other kind of situations? Do you usually ask other teacher(s) about how to manage different situations (real or hypothetical)? How is your previous knowledge on the topic (from books, articles, discussion in class) helping you with this experience?</p> <p>⇒ How did you deal with them when you were the teacher? <u>What other kind of problems do you usually want to know/learn about the children? What else do you pay attention to (from inside or outside the classroom)?</u></p> <p>⇒ Wow! Good!</p> 	<p>I mainly observe when Mary presents the topic: how she presents it and what she does when the children are making noise. Also, what the children do when doing an activity or when they are mad or distracted. However, these last weeks <u>I have noticed that some kids do not participate at all; they are just quiet looking at the others, or some kids throw tantrums because of simple things like they are not given what they want or we don't do what they want. I really would like to know why those things happen; for example, if they do that because of us, their classmates, their mood that day and more.</u> I know we can learn a lot from observing and I believe in the long run we will know more about our students by observing each other, the kids and when we ourselves give classes. Yes! And please, consider also what experts say about working with kids this age. It is important to read and reflect on what they say and suggest and try to see how it works with your kids, in this specific context.</p> <p>My mom is a teacher; nonetheless, she works with teenagers. She sometimes gives me ideas for my activities and some discipline strategies and what happens in her classes. She has never worked with kids; thus, she really doesn't know how to control 32 minions. Hahaha Moreover, two of my closest aunts work in kindergarten. In fact, one of them works</p>

Appendix 5: Consent forms phase 1 and 2 (samples)



STUDENT CONSENT FORM PHASE 1

Researcher: Floricely Dzay Chulim

Warwick ID number: 1261792

Supervisors: Dr. Steve Mann & Dr. Keith Richards

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated August 29th 2013 for the project that the Warwick PhD student, Floricely Dzay Chulim, will be conducting in the University of Quintana Roo with students of the last year of the English Language degree. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I understand that the study aims to learn about pre-service teachers reflective process and level, and to do an interventionist study in order to help us (pre-service teachers) to engage in and enhance reflection, and that the study will be divided into two phases: an exploratory phase and an interventionist phase.

I understand the procedure for each phase.

I agree to participate in the first phase of the study.

I understand that for this phase I am given the right to choose to provide the following information and participate in the following activities (marked with a tick), which will serve to collect data:

- ☒ Copy of my journals
- ☒ Copy of my observation reports
- ☒ Answer a questionnaire
- ☒ Participate in a group interview

I understand that the first phase of the research will be conducted from September to October 2013.

I understand that the data collection will be through journals and reports, a questionnaire, and a group interview.

I understand that the group interview will be video recorded.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw and refuse to participate at any time with no penalty.

I understand that my identity will be strictly confidential: for this, I will provide a pseudonym or alias as a personal identifier that only the researcher and I will know. My name or identity will never be revealed under any circumstance.

I understand that all the information I provide (data) for this research will be safely stored in a password protected computer, in an external and password protected hard drive as well as in a password protected online storage facility (Dropbox); and only the researcher and her supervisor(s) will have access to it.

I understand that video taped sessions will be safely stored and organised, by masking my name so I cannot be easily traceable.

I understand that the information I provide during the study will be used for the researcher in her PhD reports and thesis, as well as resulting presentations and publications in the future.

I understand that I have the right to revise the transcripts of the interviews and sessions and discriminate what information I authorise to use or not.

I understand that I have the right to ask for a copy of the final report.

I understand that the role of the researcher is not that of my teacher but a PhD student doing research: she will be just an observer during this first phase

I understand that the researcher will not assign a grade for my participation in the study, so it will not affect my final grade of the subject(s).

I understand that I will receive equal treatment and the researcher will never do anything to disrespect cultural and/or religious values.

Date: 31 October 2013

Pseudonym: Kym

STUDENT CONSENT FORM PHASE 2

Researcher: Floricely Dzay Chulim
Warwick ID number: 1261792
Supervisors: Dr. Steve Mann & Dr. Keith Richards

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated January 15th 2014 for the project that the Warwick PhD student, Floricely Dzay Chulim, will be conducting in the University of Quintana Roo with students of the last year of the English Language degree. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have.

I understand that the study aims to learn about pre-service teachers reflective process and level, and to do an interventionist study in order to help us (pre-service teachers) to engage in and enhance reflection, and that the study will be divided into two phases: an exploratory phase and an interventionist phase.

I understand the procedure for each phase.

I agree to participate in the second phase of the study.

I understand that for this phase I am given the right to choose to provide the following information and participate in the following activities (marked with a tick), which will serve to collect data:

- ☒ Respond to journals' reflective questions
Provide copy of my journals
- ☐ Participate in stimulated recall sessions
Provide a copy of my lesson plans
Accept to be observed by the researcher
Accept to be video taped to elicit recall
- ☒ Participate in group reflective sessions
Accept to be audio/video taped
- ☒ Participate in a Facebook group reflections
- ☒ Participate in individual or group interviews
Accept to be audio/video taped

I understand that the second phase of the research will be conducted from January to May 2014.

I understand that the data collection will be through journals and reports, stimulated recall, group reflective sessions, and group interviews.

I understand that the stimulated recall and group reflective sessions, as well as the individual or group interviews will be audio or video recorded.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw and refuse to participate at any time with no penalty.

I understand that my identity will be strictly confidential: for this, I will provide a pseudonym or alias as a personal identifier that only the researcher and I will know. My name or identity will never be revealed under any circumstance.

I understand that all the information I provide (data) for this research will be safely stored in a password protected computer, in an external and password protected hard drive as well as in a password protected online storage facility (Dropbox); and only the researcher and her supervisor(s) will have access to it.

I understand that video taped sessions will be safely stored and organised, by masking my name so I cannot be easily traceable.

I understand that the information I provide during the study will be used for the researcher in her PhD reports and thesis, as well as resulting presentations and publications in the future.

I understand that I have the right to revise the transcripts of the interviews and sessions and discriminate what information I authorise to use or not.

I understand that I have the right to ask for a copy of the final report.

I understand that the role of the researcher is not that of my teacher but a PhD student doing research: she will be just a guide during this second phase.

I understand that the researcher will not assign a grade for my participation in the study, so it will not affect my final grade of the subject(s).

I understand that I will receive equal treatment and the researcher will never do anything to disrespect cultural and/or religious values.

(Name and signature)
Student of the *teaching practice*
subject
University of Quintana Roo

Researcher
University of Warwick

Date: 15/01/14

Pseudonym: Shon

Appendix 6: Coding process (samples)

Figure A: Pre-coding

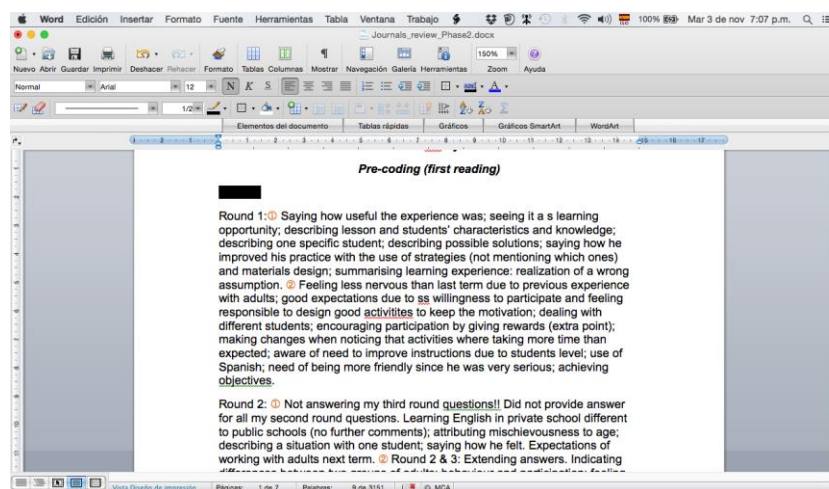


Figure B: First and second coding

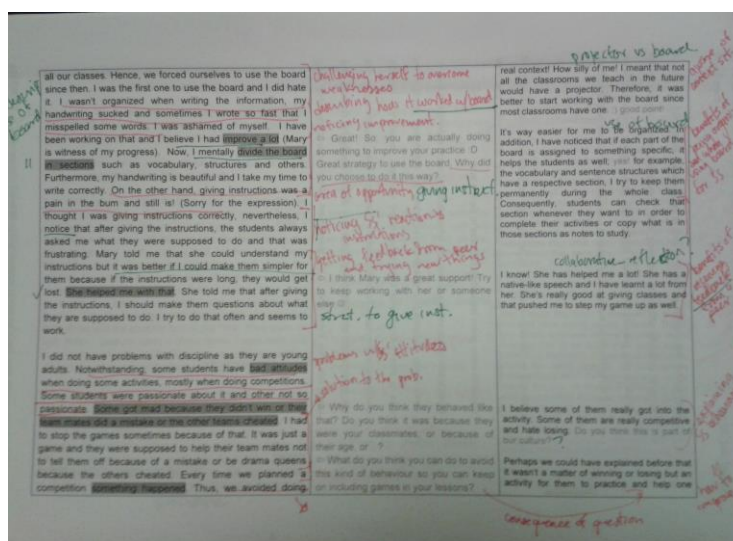


Figure C: Summary of themes, first attempt (sample)

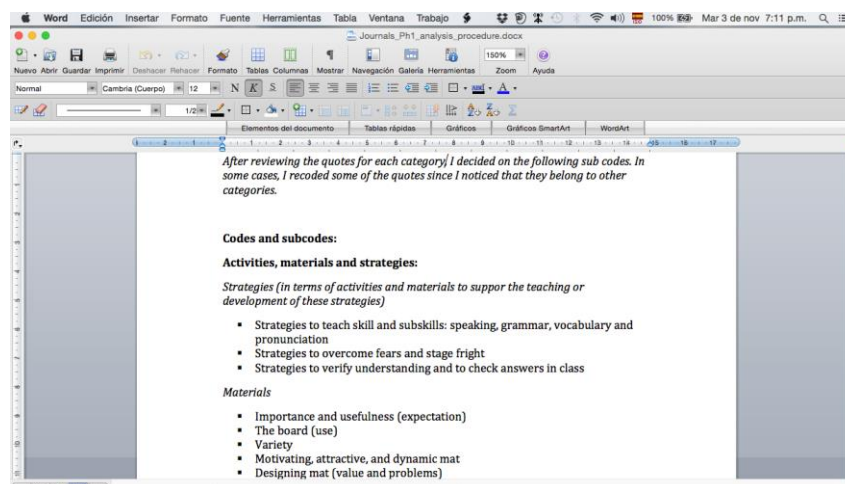


Figure D: Summary of themes, second attempt (sample)

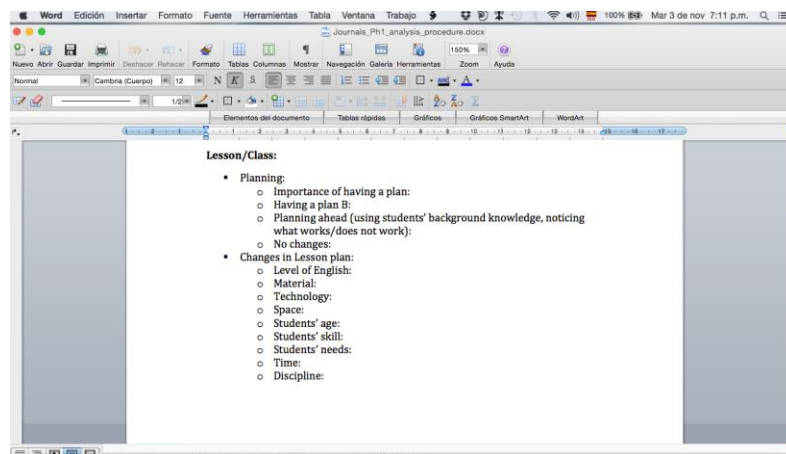


Figure E: Summary of themes, third attempt (sample)

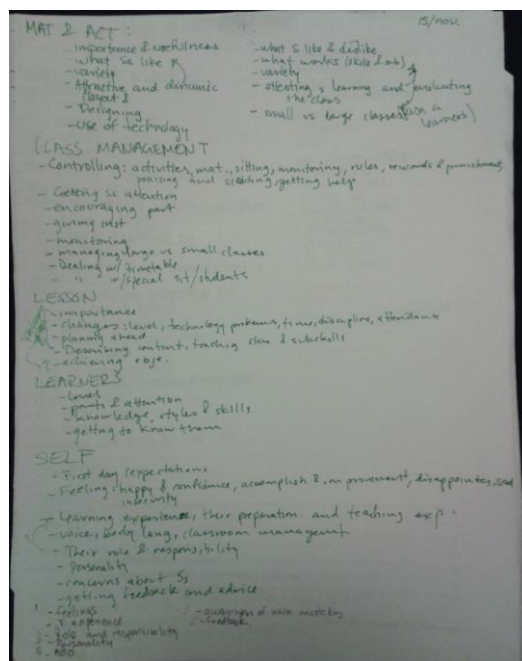


Figure F: Grouping, re-grouping and making connections

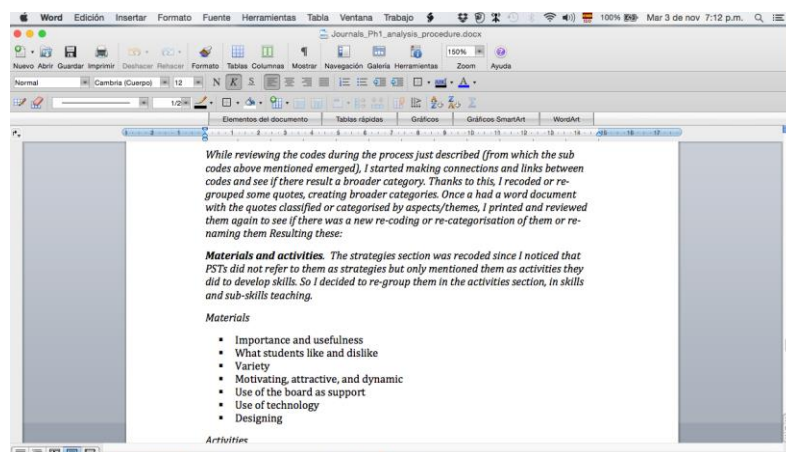


Figure G: Final themes (part 1)

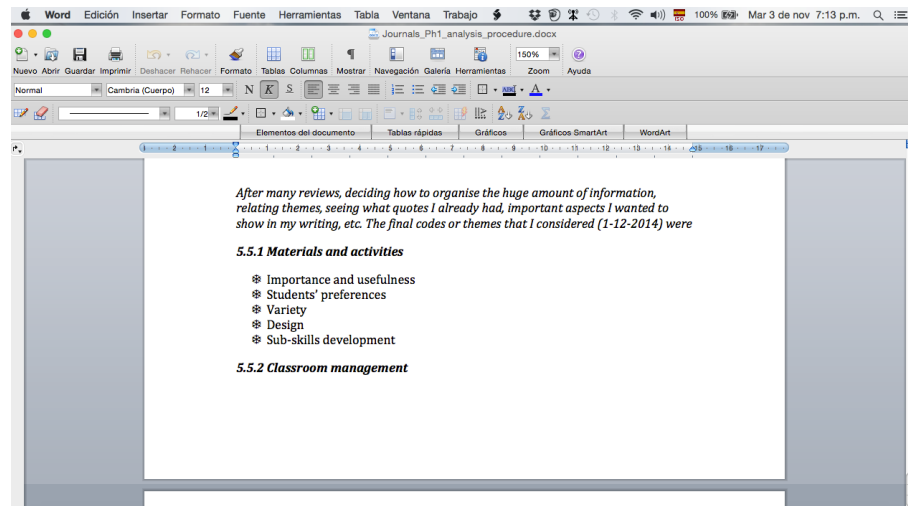


Figure H: Final themes (part 2)

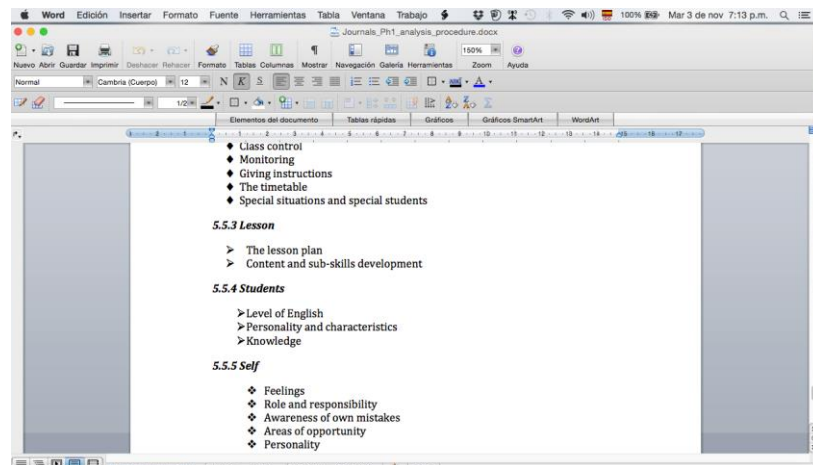
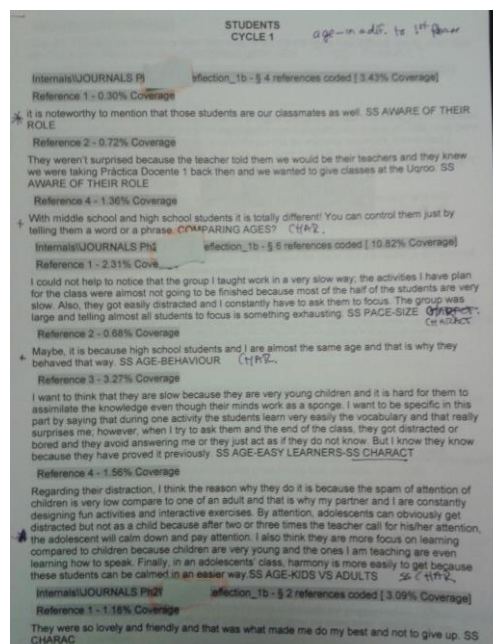
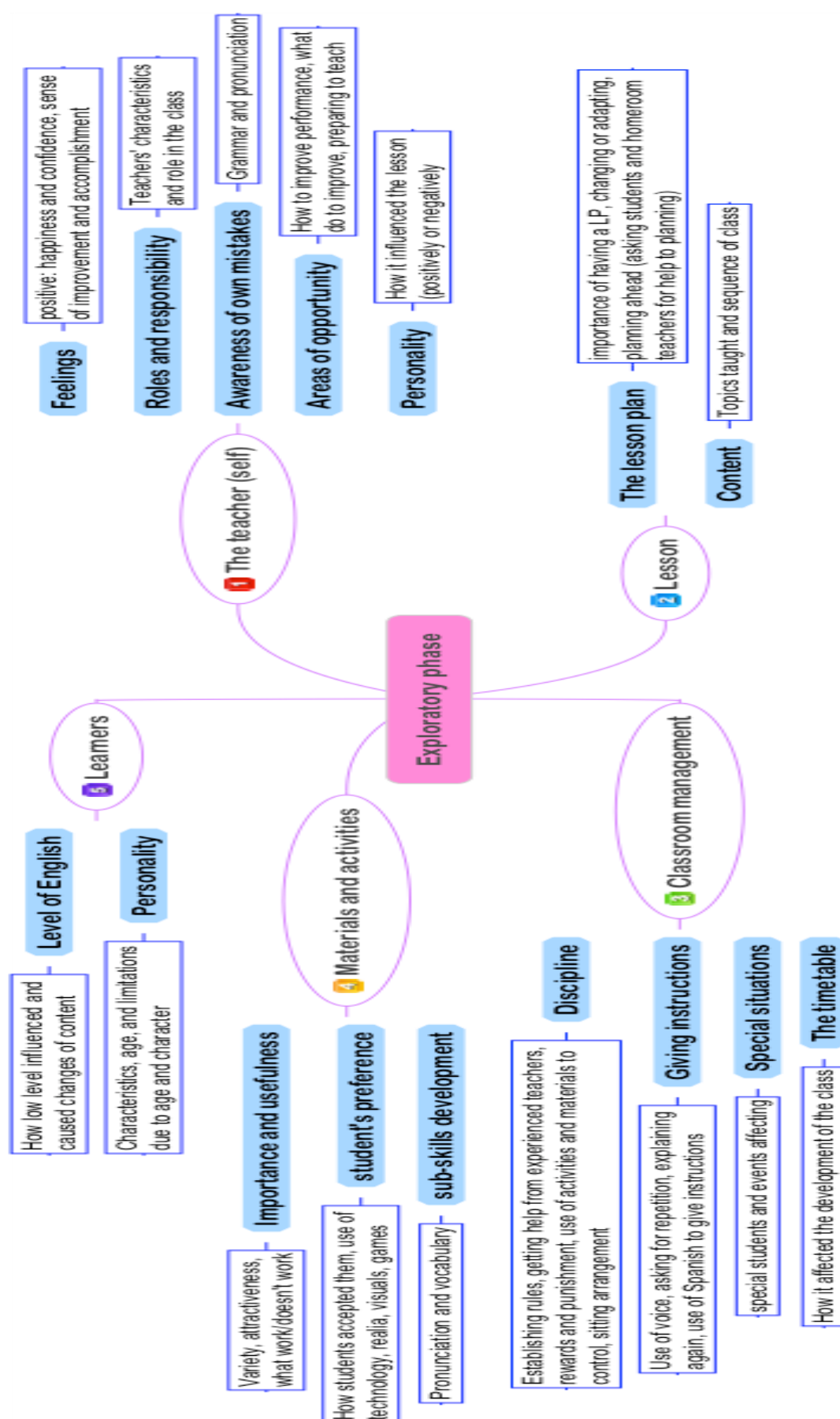


Figure I: Nvivo summary of quotes per theme (sample)



Appendix 7: Details of themes, Exploratory phase



Appendix 8: NVivo counting, Intervention Phase (sample C1 and C4)

Home Create Data Analyze Query Explore Layout View						
<div> <div>Open Get Info Edit</div> <div>Paste Copy Merge</div> <div>B I U Text: [color]</div> <div>Paragraph Styles</div> <div>Reset Settings</div> <div>Select Find Insert Delete</div> </div>						
<div>SOURCES</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internals Externals Memos <div>NODES</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nodes Node Matrices <div>CLASSIFICATIONS</div> <div>COLLECTIONS</div> <div>QUERIES</div>	Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On
	PHASE TWO	0	0	20/01/2015 18:35	FDC	20/01/2015 18:35
	C1 Themes	0	0	27/01/2015 14:30	FDC	27/01/2015 14:32
	Class Manag	7	29	28/01/2015 19:35	FDC	29/01/2015 12:01
	Self	7	57	28/01/2015 19:35	FDC	29/01/2015 12:02
	Context	6	14	28/01/2015 19:45	FDC	29/01/2015 12:00
	Lesson	6	15	28/01/2015 19:35	FDC	29/01/2015 11:53
	Ss	6	20	28/01/2015 19:35	FDC	29/01/2015 12:01
	Materials and activi...	5	9	28/01/2015 19:35	FDC	29/01/2015 11:57

Home Create Data Analyze Query Explore Layout View						
<div> <div>Open Get Info Edit</div> <div>Paste Copy Merge</div> <div>B I U Text: [color]</div> <div>Paragraph Styles</div> <div>Reset Settings</div> <div>Select Find Insert Delete</div> </div>						
<div>SOURCES</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internals Externals Memos <div>NODES</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nodes Node Matrices <div>CLASSIFICATIONS</div> <div>COLLECTIONS</div> <div>QUERIES</div>	Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On
	C4 Themes	0	0	28/01/2015 19:36	FDC	18/03/2015 11:48
	Self	8	44	18/03/2015 11:48	FDC	14/04/2015 18:35
	Class Manag	7	33	18/03/2015 11:48	FDC	14/04/2015 18:30
	Lesson	5	12	18/03/2015 11:48	FDC	14/04/2015 18:35
	Materials and activi...	5	8	18/03/2015 11:48	FDC	14/04/2015 18:33
	Students	4	15	18/03/2015 11:48	FDC	14/04/2015 18:27
	Context	1	6	18/03/2015 11:48	FDC	14/04/2015 16:54
	C5 Themes	0	0	28/01/2015 19:36	FDC	18/03/2015 11:48

Appendix 9: Facebook entries (samples)



Flori Dzay 😊 se siente curiosa

12 de febrero de 2014

Speaking of Discipline problems in the classroom... what has been the most challenging situation you have faced? Tell us about your experience and what you did in order to overcome the situation.

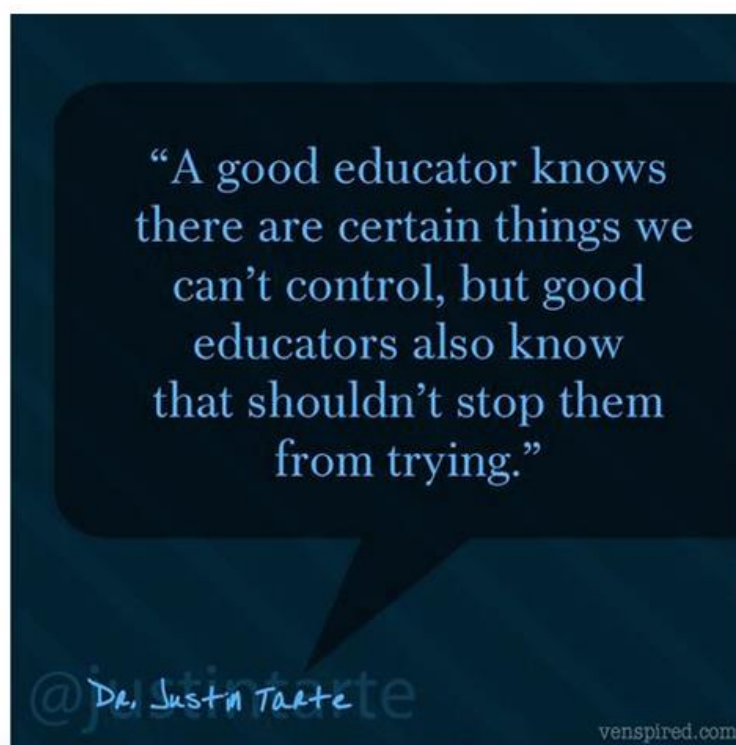
👍 Me gusta

💬 Comentar



Flori Dzay compartió la foto de Teachers With a Sense of Humor.

16 de febrero de 2014



Flori Dzay subió un archivo.

24 de febrero de 2014

Hi, guys!! Here's a (one page) document with some characteristics of a good teacher. I just wanted to share it with you 😊



CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD LANGUAGE TEACHER_Brown.docx

Documento

Descargar

Vista previa

Subir revisión

👍 Me gusta

💬 Comentar

Appendix 10: Movie synopsis



In Director Tony Kaye's *Detachment*, Academy Award® winner Adrien Brody stars as Henry Barthes, an educator with a true talent to connect with his students. Yet Henry has chosen to bury his gift. By spending his days as a substitute teacher, he conveniently avoids any emotional connections by never staying anywhere long enough to form an attachment to either students or colleagues. When a new assignment places him at a public school where a frustrated, burned-out administration has created an apathetic student body, Henry quickly becomes a role model as a teacher who actually cares about the well-being of these students. In finding an emotional connection to the students but also fellow teachers and a runaway teen, he finds that he's not alone in a life and death struggle to find beauty in a seemingly vicious and loveless world.

- Written by [Tribeca Film](#)

Appendix 11: Details of themes, Intervention phase

